Hafa Adai!

House OKs bill that will apply the Int'l Fire Code guiding standard in the NMI. PAGE 2

'E-gaming will do nothing to enhance tourism.' PAGE 3

$1

# Saipan Tribune

Volume XXXIV, Issue No. 36
**TUESDAY** FEBRUARY 20, 2024
**www.saipantribune.com**
www.facebook.com/saipantribune

KIMBERLY B. ESMORES
M/S *Zuiderdam* Capt. Frank Van Der Hoeven shows Commonwealth Ports Authority officials how he and his team managed to enter the Saipan channel, which is notorious for being difficult to maneuver due to how narrow it is.

## *Zuiderdam* makes first Saipan port call

By KIMBERLY B. ESMORES
kimberly_esmores@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

Holland America Line's M/S *Zuiderdam*, a mid-size cruise ship that is bringing over 1,000 passengers around the world in a span of 128 days, made its first port call on Saipan yesterday.

Despite the bad weather

*See ZUIDERDAM on Page 4*

# Edward Castro apprehended

By KIMBERLY B. ESMORES
kimberly_esmores@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

Castro

After over a week of searching, the Department of Public Safety has finally apprehended Edward Castro, who was allegedly involved in a burglary and theft incident on Capital Hill where over $126,000 worth of items were stolen.

According to assistant Chief of Police Simon Manacop, Castro was apprehended yesterday and, as per standard procedure, is expected to appear before a judge today for an initial hearing and a bail hearing.

He was first reported wanted by police last Feb. 6.

Castro allegedly served as an accomplice to two individuals who are accused of breaking into a home on Capital Hill and stealing over $126,000 in cash and items.

The two individuals allegedly involved in this case are Brandon Joel Lizama Benavente and Consalacion Villagomez Muña Sablan, who themselves have already been apprehended and charged in court.

Sablan and Benavente were arrested on Feb. 1, when police executed a search warrant in relation to the theft and burglary case that Jing had reported. During the search, police also busted the couple for possession of methamphetamine, a firearm, and ammunition.

## EPA wants CUC to pay over $160K in penalties

By KIMBERLY B. ESMORES
kimberly_esmores@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency has slapped the Commonwealth Utilities Corp. with over $160,000 in penalties for failing to fill critical vacant positions.

In a letter to acting CUC executive director Betty Terlaje last week, EPA-Enforcement and Compliance Assurance Division director Amy

*See EPA on Page 4*

## *Terlaje: EPA's assumption on my authority is incorrect*

By FERDIE DE LA TORRE
ferdie_delatorre@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

Terlaje

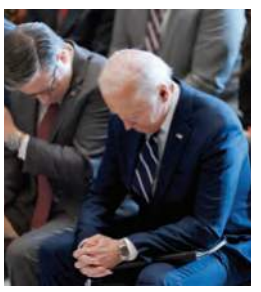
Acting Commonwealth Utilities Corp. executive director Betty G. Terlaje said yesterday the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's assumption that she lacks sufficient authority to implement major changes or make significant decisions is incorrect.

In response to *Saipan Tribune*'s request for comments regarding EPA's demand that CUC pay a $162,000 penalty, Terlaje also disclosed that they intend to negotiate with EPA as per the procedures laid out in the Stipulated Orders as they believe that the more

*See TERLAJE on Page 4*

## INSIDE

**BUSINESS**
It's time to gather your tribe for a night of laid-back luxury at Mari Bar for our weekly Beauty & Beau night.
**PAGE 11**



**NATION**
The U.S. Constitution doesn't mention Christianity or any specific religion. The Declaration of Independence famously proclaims that people's rights come from a "Creator" and "Nature's God"—but doesn't specify who that is.
**PAGE 12**

**LIFE & STYLE**
Atom bomb epic "Oppenheimer" won seven prizes, including best picture, director and actor, at the 77th British Academy Film Awards on Sunday, cementing its front-runner status for the Oscars next month.
**PAGE 15**

SCAN ME WITH A COMPATIBLE QR READER TO KEEP UPDATED ON ALL THE LATEST NEWS.

# Local

## House OKs bill that will apply Int'l Fire Code guiding standard in NMI

FERDIE DE LA TORRE

Rep. Thomas John Dela Cruz Manglona (R-Saipan), seated second at extreme left, thanks his colleagues during a session on Friday for unanimously passing his bill that proposes to amend the CNMI Fire Safety Code to apply the International Fire Code guiding standard in the Commonwealth.

By FERDIE DE LA TORRE
ferdie_delatorre@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

The House of Representatives unanimously passed on Friday a bill that proposes to amend the CNMI Fire Safety Code to apply the International Fire Code guiding standard in the Commonwealth.

With all 20 House members present at a session voting "yes," House Bill 23-82, House Draft 1, now goes to the Senate for action.

The House Judiciary and Governmental Operations Committee had recommended the passage of the bill.

The bill will replace references of the Uniform Fire Code in the Commonwealth Fire Safety Code with references to the International Fire Code.

Rep. Thomas John Dela Cruz Manglona (R-Saipan), who is the author of the legislation, said the bill is one small step into creating more efficiency and streamlining the processes when it comes to business permits and licensing.

Attorney General Edward Manibusan said in his written comments that the bill as written is constitutionally sufficient.

Manibusan said the bill proposes to update the Commonwealth Fire Safety Code to adopt the IFC since the Uniform Fire Code has already been phased out and replaced by the IFC.

He noted that 42 states; Washington, D.C.; Guam; and Puerto Rico have either used or adopted the IFC as their model code.

The JGO Committee chaired by Rep. Marissa Renee Flores (Ind-Saipan) made some non-substantive technical amendments and other amendments to strengthen the intent of the legislation.

The IFC establishes minimum requirements for fire prevention and fire protection systems using perspective and performance-related provisions.

According to the committee report, IFC is founded on broad-based principles that make possible the use of new materials and new system designs.

The committee finds that IFC is designed to address conditions hazardous to life and property from fire, explosions, handling or use of hazardous materials, and the use and occupancy of buildings and premises.

The committee finds that the IFC is a more appropriate code to apply in the CNMI and recommends that the current statutes be amended to reflect such change.

The committee believes that the CNMI will benefit tremendously by adopting the IFC and will allow for them to interact and relate to other states and territories.

## Revocation hearing for IPI is postponed—again

FERDIE DE LA TORRE

Imperial Pacific International (CNMI) LLC's Imperial Pacific Resort in Garapan is seen here in this file photo.

By FERDIE DE LA TORRE
ferdie_delatorre@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

The hearing whether or not to revoke Imperial Pacific International (CNMI) LLC's exclusive casino license that was supposed to be held today has been postponed again, this time to Feb. 28, 2024, as IPI and the Commonwealth Casino Commission continue settlement negotiations.

CCC executive director Andrew Yeom told *Saipan Tribune* Monday night that these delays are caused by multiple parties that are involved in the discussion.

"Unfortunately, much of the delay is beyond CCC's desire in terms of our plan of action, and we sincerely hope to have an ending to this discussion very soon," Yeom said.

In his order on Feb. 15 granting the parties' motion to continue the hearing to Feb. 28, CCC board vice chair Rafael Demapan said the CCC is increasingly strained to view such requests in a "favorable light" since the motion to postpone is the third of its kind. Because of this, he said the CCC is increasingly inclined to cast doubt as to whether a continuance is in the public interest.

"The parties are urged to bear this in mind," Demapan said.

Last Feb. 13, Yeom and IPI filed the third joint motion to continue the enforcement hearing for two complaints against IPI from Feb. 20, 2024,0 to Feb. 28, 2024. Yeom and IPI stated that they continue to be engaged in settlement discussions and need more time.

The CCC board set the revocation hearing originally for Jan. 31, 2024. The hearing was reset to Feb. 12, 2024, but the parties then requested to move it to Feb. 20, 2024.

IPI failed to pay some $62 million in casino license fees it owes the CNMI government by the Dec. 30, 2023, deadline.

CNMI BRAIN BUILDERS
BUMPER STICKER CHALLENGE
YOU ALREADY HAVE WHAT IT TAKES. YOU ARE A CNMI BRAIN BUILDER!
Place your CNMI Brain Builder Sticker on your car if you haven't already.
You get a prize when we spot you on the road/the parking lot.
TAKE A CHANCE TO WIN
Prizes

CROWNE PLAZA
RESORT SAIPAN
Micronesia's Leading Resort
WANTS YOU
Open Position:
EXECUTIVE HOUSEKEEPER
Crowne Plaza Resort Saipan was recognized as Micronesia's Leading Resort in 2023 by the World Travel Awards. Join our team and experience growth with endless possibilities. We provide competitive benefits packages.
Send you CV/Resume to: hr.cprsaipan@ihg.com or the Human Resources Office

# ‘E-gaming will do nothing to enhance tourism’

By FERDIE DE LA TORRE
ferdie_delatorre@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

There is no tourist market segment that has shown any interest in small hotels or establishments that have poker and slot machines in their premises, according to the Saipan Chamber of Commerce.

In fact, Korean tourists make up the vast majority of arrivals to Saipan and most visitors within that market are families, said Chamber president Joe C. Guerrero.

“Families are not attracted to gaming in general nor to poker/slot clubs specifically,” said Guerrero in the Chamber’s recent written comments opposing House Bill 23-85.

Authored by Rep. Ralph N. Yumul (Ind-Saipan), House Bill 23-85 proposes to allow businesses who cumulatively possess more than 100 hotel rooms to engage in electronic gaming activities.

The bill proposes to amend the current e-gaming law to allow for hotels with at least 30 rooms to add poker and slot machines in their premises. For Saipan, the legislation will allow this variance only in western Garapan.

In response to *Saipan Tribune*’s questions yesterday, Yumul said the bill is still in the Gaming Committee that he chairs and that they have not decided on a date to discuss the legislation. He deferred to comment on the Chamber’s position as they are preparing to hold hearings on another matter.

Guerrero said the bill will likely damage tourism by downgrading the tourist experience in Garapan, which is the heart of the CNMI’s tourism industry.

He said the presence of e-gaming lounges will negatively impact the vacation experience of any tourist walking through Saipan’s tourist area, create safety and security issues and potentially attract undesirable persons and activities to the area.

As for the CNMI’s secondary tourist source market of Japan, none of the active market segments traveling internationally are inclined to participate in this activity, Guerrero said.

Guerrero

He said the most active travel segments from Japan are “Office Ladies,” families, company trips, and high school groups and that none of these segments will be selecting Saipan as their destination of choice due to the availability of these lounges, nor will they avail of them while they are on island.

“The presence of e-gaming in Garapan will do nothing to enhance tourism,” Guerrero pointed out.

He said Yumul introduced the bill in response to comments from the source market of Japan that there was little for tourists to do after 8pm.

Guerrero said the CNMI government is spending more than $10 million to upgrade the Garapan area, but the presence of small e-gaming lounges will detract from that effort.

He recalled that there was a

*See E-GAMING on Page 4*

# Palacios in DC for IGIA, NGA meetings

By FERDIE DE LA TORRE
ferdie_delatorre@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

Gov. Arnold I. Palacios left the CNMI last Friday for Washington, D.C. to attend the 2024 senior plenary meeting of the Interagency Group on Insular Areas and National Association of Governors’ winter meeting.

*Saipan Tribune* learned that Climate Policy and Planning Program special assistant Christina Sablan and acting chief of staff Marie Coleman accompanied Palacios in the federally-funded trip.

Palacios

According to the Office of the Governor yesterday, Palacios’ main focus at the IGIA meeting is to continue advancing the CNMI’s interests, particularly in areas of economic development, infrastructure development, and other areas.

The IGIA senior plenary meeting will be held in-person on Feb. 21, 2024, from 9am to 12:30pm in the Department of the Interior’s Sidney R. Yates Auditorium at 1849 C. Street NW, Washington, D.C.

DOI Office of Insular Affairs director John D. Brewer invited Palacios to the IGIA meeting on behalf of Interior Secretary Deb Haaland, White House Office of Intergovernmental Affairs director Tom Perez, and DOI assistant secretary for Insular and International Affairs Carmen G. Cantor.

Brewer said in his letter last Wednesday to Palacios that the IGIA senior plenary meeting remains one of the most important platforms for the governor and other territorial leaders to amplify issues and perspectives by communicating them directly to the White House and federal agencies.

Brewer said they will continue the infrastructure theme from the 2003 IGIA, along with several other topics critical to the territories.

The draft agenda of the IGIA meeting shows that Palacios, Delegate Gregorio Kilili C. Sablan (D-MP), Guam Gov. Lourdes Leon Guerrero, and Guam Rep. James C. Moylan will have presentations.

Other territorial officials who are set to hold presentations are U.S. Virgin Islands Gov. Albert Bryan Jr., American Samoa Gov. Lemanu Mauga, U.S. Virgin Islands Rep. Stacey Plaskett (D-USVI), and American Samoa Rep. Amata Coleman Radewagen (R-A. Samoa).

Other than Palacios, there was no information as of yesterday which of the territorial officials have or have not confirmed their participation.

Haaland and Perez will deliver remarks.

There will also be federal presentations from the White House Infrastructure Office/DOI Office on Insular Affairs, U.S. Department of Defense, U.S. Department of Agriculture, and other agencies.

Palacios will also join the nation’s governors at the National Governors Association 2024 Winter Meeting from Feb. 22 to 24.

According to the NGA website, the association will host the nation’s governors, federal officials, and leaders from business, academia, and philanthropy in Washington, D.C. “for solutions-driven conversations and bipartisan collaboration” on top policy issues facing states and territories.

Speakers and panelists for the Feb. 24 session include U.S. Secretary of Agriculture Tom Vilsack and U.S. Secretary of Commerce Gina Raimondo.

The Winter Meeting is one of the two convenings of the NGA, the bipartisan organization representing governors from the 55 states and territories.

**COMMONWEALTH UTILITIES CORPORATION**

**REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS**
**CUC-RFP-24-011**
**DEBT COLLECTION LEGAL SERVICES**

The Office of the Executive Director, Commonwealth Utilities Corporation (CUC), is soliciting competitive sealed proposals from qualified and experienced entities for Debt Collection Legal Services.

The RFP Package may be obtained from the CUC Procurement and Supply Office, 3rd Floor, Room No. 3, Joeten Dandan Commercial Building, Saipan, between 7:30 a.m. to 11:30 a.m. and 12:30 p.m. to 4:30 p.m., Monday through Friday, except on government observed holidays, upon completion of registration and presentation of a receipt evidencing a non-refundable payment to the CUC Treasury Section, by cash, check or credit card in the amount of $100.00 for one RFP package set. Perspective Entities must pre-register with the CUC Procurement & Supply.

**One (1) original and five (5) hard copies** of your submission must be submitted in a sealed envelope marked “**CUC-RFP-24-011, Debt Collection Legal Services**” to the CUC Procurement & Supply Office, 3rd Floor, Room No. 3, Joeten Dandan Commercial Building, P.O. Box 501220, Saipan, MP 96950, no later than **10:00 A.M.(ChST) on March 15, 2024,** Late submissions and conditional offers will not be considered.

Discussions may be conducted with responsible offerors who submit proposals determined to be reasonably susceptible of being selected for award for the purpose of clarification and to ensure full understanding of and responsiveness to solicitation requirements. All proposers shall be accorded fair and equal treatment with respect to any opportunity for discussion. During discussions, there will be no disclosure of any information derived from proposals submitted by competing proposers.

All Proposers are advised that CUC assumes no responsibility in any act of omission on the part of the Proposer due to lack of information or understanding of the proposal requirements in the course of Contractor’s preparation of a proposal or supply under the contract. The RFP does not commit CUC to award a contract, to pay any cost incurred in the preparation of the proposal under this request, or to procure or contract for services. The Proposers are required to comply with all CNMI and applicable Federal Laws. This bid and the ensuing contract shall be executed as per the CUC Procurement Regulations.

Questions or requests for clarification will be entertained only from pre-registered prospective proposers and must be submitted in writing no later than **10:00 AM (ChST) on February 23, 2024,** to Manny Sablan, CUC’s Purchasing Administrator via email address manny.sablan@cucgov.org with a copy to Bettina G. Terlaje, CUC’s Chief of Administration via email betty.terlaje@cucgov.org and Marcela Tenorio, CUC’s Senior Administrative Technician via email address marcela.tenorio@cucgov.org.

CUC reserves the right to reject any or all proposals for any reason and to waive any defects in said proposal, if in its sole opinion, to do so would be in the best interest of CUC. All proposals shall become the property of CUC.

BETTINA G. TERLAJE
Acting Executive Director

MANNY B. SABLAN
Purchasing Administrator

**Commonwealth Utilities Corporation**
**Board of Directors**

**PUBLIC NOTICE**

Pursuant to the Open Government Act (1 CMC §9901 et seq), the Commonwealth Utilities Corporation (“CUC”) Board of Directors hereby informs the general public that the Board will hold a Special Board Meeting on Friday, February 23, 2024 at 10:00 a.m. The meeting will be held at the CUC Conference Room, Room 17, 3rd Floor, Joeten Dandan Building to consider the following agenda. Public attendance is welcome.

**AGENDA***

I. Preliminary Matters
 A. Call to Order
 B. Roll Call
 C. Reading of the Notice of the Agenda
 D. Adoption of Agenda

II. Update on the Recruitment of the Executive Director Position/Compensation Levels

III. Proposed Amendments to CUC Procurement Regulations

IV. Petty Cash Policy

V. Human Resources Matters

VI. Public Comments

VII. Executive Session **
 (Consultation with Legal Counsel)

VIII. Adjournment

_____/s/_____
JANICE A. TENORIO

* All interested persons are welcome to attend, submit written and oral testimony on the above-Agenda items.
** Public Comments are limited to 30 minutes and each remark is limited to three minutes.
*** Pursuant to 1 CMC §9912, the CUC Board of Directors may vote to meet at any time in executive session, in consultation with the Legal Counsel on matters deemed privileged and confidential.

Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands
**HEALTH CARE PROFESSIONS LICENSING BOARD**
P.O. Box 502078, Bldg., 1242 Pohnpei Court
Capitol Hill, Saipan, MP 96950
Tel No: (670) 664-4809 Fax: (670) 664-4814
Email: info@cnmilicensing.gov.mp • Website: www.cnmilicensing.gov.mp

Pursuant to P.L. 8-41, Section 11, Governor Arnold I. Palacios and Lt. Governor David M. Apatang, through the Health Care Professions Licensing Board (HCPLB) hereby gives notice that it will hold its regular monthly board meeting on ***Wednesday, February 21, 2024, at 8 a.m.*** on Saipan. The meeting will be held at the Board of Professional Licensing Conference Room, BPL Building on Capitol Hill.

**AGENDA**

I. Meeting Call to Order
II. Determination of Quorum
III. Review and Adoption of Agenda
IV. Review and Adoption of Minutes (01/17/2024)
V. Public Comments
VI. Chairperson’s Report
VII. Director’s Report
 1. Localgov Update – via ZOOM Meeting
 2. FY2024 Annual Budget Call
 3. Dr. Song Rhim’s Monitoring Report
VIII. Investigator’s Report
IX. Communications from the Governor’s Office & Legislature
 A. Governor’s Office
 1. Re-Appointment of Dr. Marty Rohringer and Dr. Glenda George to the HCPLBoard
 B. Legislature
 2. Public Hearing Schedule for Dr. Glenda George to the HCPLB – February 16, 2024, 10:00 AM
X. Old Business
 1. Proposed Regulations Report (Ad Hoc Committee – Chairperson: Dr. Glenda George)
  a.) Social Workers and Mental Health Counselors
 2. Proposed Regulation (§ 185-10-1605(g) to Increase Delinquent License Fees for Renewal – Final Board Approval
XI. New Business
XII. Pending Applications for Board’s Review
 A. New Application
 B. Renewal Application
XIII. Miscellaneous Business
XIV. Executive Session: The Board may vote to meet in executive session to consult with Counsel on pending or anticipated legal matters.
XV. Announcements
 A. Next Meeting Date
 B. Adjournment of Meeting

## ZUIDERDAM

*From page 1*

that made traveling through the challenging Saipan channel more difficult than it already is, the M/S *Zuiderdam* managed to bring about 1,200 guests and 790 crew members to Saipan for just a daylong visit. They left yesterday in the afternoon.

The Saipan channel is notorious for being difficult to maneuver due to how narrow it is, but Capt. Frank Van Der Hoeven, who has been the ship's captain for over 20 years, said he and his team have already practiced how to do it via simulations.

While it was the M/S *Zuiderdam*'s first stopover on Saipan, Van Der Hoeven said he felt like he knew by heart how to maneuver through Saipan's channel yesterday morning due to the numerous simulation training he and his team went through in preparation for the port call.

"This is [our] first time coming to Saipan but I felt like I've been here before. We had very limited data from past arrivals from other corporate vessels [that have been to Saipan] and with the expected strong winds, I was not certain if a ship of this size would make it. So, we engaged with our training center in The Netherlands to create a simulation of the Saipan channel. We worked with Sea Smart to create a scenario for our Saipan arrival and departure. We trialed first without current and without wind, then we stepped it up each time with more wind and more current, getting more difficult each time to make sure we could navigate the channel. That created for us a better picture of what to expect once we were committed to travel through the channel," he said.

KIMBERLY B. ESMORES

Holland America Line's M/S *Zuiderdam*, a mid-size cruise ship that is set to bring over 1,000 passengers around the world in the span of 128 days, made its first port call on Saipan yesterday.

Despite all that preparation, though, sailing through the Saipan channel still made his heart race, Van Der Hoeven said, but he was adamant about making it to Saipan as he wanted his crew and his guests to experience the island even for just a day.

He hopes this will be the first of many future port calls. "We put in all this effort to prepare for our port call [on] Saipan because I did not want to cancel. …We really wanted to come. No captain wants to cancel a port call unless he or she is absolutely confident it is too risky in terms of safety. In this particular case, I was pretty confident that I could have up to 35 knots of wind and still make it through the Saipan channel to allow our guest and crew to experience the island of Saipan," he said.

The vessel left Fort Lauderdale on Jan. 3, and is expected to arrive at Fort Lauderdale on May 11, completing a cruise around the world in 128 days.

After departing from the Saipan port at around 5pm yesterday, the vessel is expected to be out at sea for three days before arriving at Ishigaki, Japan. From there, the *Zuiderdam* will visit other ports in Japan, including Naha, Tokyo, Kobe, Fukuoka, and more before heading to China and Hong Kong.

"However, instead of going through the Red Sea, because of the political tension, we had to change out itinerary three weeks ago and instead we will be going through Cape Hope in South Africa. Then we will follow the South African coast, making port calls before heading back to Fort Lauderdale," said Van Der Hoeven.

Commonwealth Ports Authority chair Joe Ayuyu said in a statement he is happy that the M/S *Zuiderdam* was able to visit Saipan as its visit means good things for the CNMI's economy.

"This visit is a big thing for us because it brought in nearly 2,000 people. This is a boost to our economy because a lot of these tourists get off board and explore the island. The impression I got from some of the tourists is that [Saipan] is a beautiful destination," he said.

KIMBERLY B. ESMORES

M/S *Zuiderdam* crew, Commonwealth Ports Authority officials, and CNMI stakeholders pose for a photo during a tour of the cruise ship yesterday morning.

## EPA

*From page 1*

C. Miller-Bowen said EPA is demanding that CUC pay $162,000 in penalties for failing to timely fill critical vacant positions such as the executive director and the chief financial officer positions.

The letter was filed with the U.S. District Court for the NMI as part of a status report in a pending federal case involving CUC.

Regarding both vacancies, Miller-Bowen said CUC was required to fill the positions within 150 days of the date of the vacancy. The position of executive director became vacant on Feb. 22, 2023, while the chief financial officer position became vacant on May, 21, 2023.

Currently, the CFO position remains vacant and the current position of acting executive director—which Terlaje occupies—does not provide her with sufficient authority to implement major changes or make significant decisions.

"These are critical positions that impact CUC's compliance with the substantive requirements of Stipulated Orders 1 and 2. It is critical for CUC to have a financial plan and master plan, as required by SO1, to scope out and solidify its financial future. Without an executive director or CFO, however, EPA does not believe progress on these plans will occur. Federal court intervention may be necessary to ensure compliance," she said.

Miller-Bowen said SO1 authorizes penalties for violations of the requirement to fill vacancies within 150 days in the amount of $1,000 per day for the first 30 days, $2,000 per day for the next 30 days, and $5,000 for each day thereafter.

"Stipulated penalties accruing through Feb. 28, 2024, for the violations regarding the executive director and chief financial officer amount to $1,355,000. We are willing to compromise the accrued stipulated penalties and are officially demanding payment of $162,600 (12% of the accrued penalties) for failure to fill the executive director and CFO positions through Feb. 28, 2024," she said.

However, Miller-Bowen noted that the penalties will continue to accrue at an increased rate if the vacancies are not filled by the end of February.

CUC must pay this amount no later than 30 days after CUC's receipt of the letter or officially send EPA a notice of dispute.

Miller-Bowen explained that EPA already wrote CUC last Sept. 12, 2023, to express concerns over its inability to fill critical positions in a timely manner.

"At that time, CUC had vacancies for four SO1 positions. EPA expressed concerns regarding CUC's delayed response for contacting qualified applicants; CUC's slow timelines for submitting résumés to EPA for approval; the lack of CUC's distribution of vacancy announcements; and concerns regarding insufficient offering of salaries and moving expenses. On Oct. 19, 2023, the EPA program official responsible for SO1 compliance issues made an in-person presentation to the CUC board of directors in which he emphasized the chronic issues with vacancies and the lack of response to EPA's September letter," she said.

Miller-Bowen noted that EPA has never received a formal response from CUC regarding the concerns raised in the September letter.

Then, on Oct. 27, 2023, Miller-Bowen said EPA followed up with a letter of concern to the CUC board.

Since the September letter, CUC has filled only one of the vacancies—the position of drinking water and wastewater division manager.

## TERLAJE

*From page 1*

reasonable path, rather than levying penalties, would be to allocate these funds toward attracting quality applicants.

Terlaje said CUC granted her full authority since her appointment as the acting executive director in April 2023.

In fact, she said, CUC's priority is not just filling key positions, as required by the Stipulated Order, but also hiring professional experts across power, water, and wastewater operations to perform works on many critical projects that will bring CUC forward, including achieving higher quality drinking water standards for the community.

"CUC has put in quite a lot of effort trying to fill these critical vacancies and continues to do so," she said.

Terlaje said they have received numerous applications for the executive director position, but many of the candidates don't meet the requirements. She said the CUC board meeting this Friday includes an update on the recruitment of an executive director.

Terlaje said the Board Interview Panel will recommend and discuss whether to offer the post to a qualified potential candidate who was interviewed two weeks ago.

"Overall, it has been difficult to attract professionals at the level of requirements called for in the Stipulated Order if the compensation we offer isn't better than what they are already earning or offering in the U.S.," she said.

She said CUC is competing with U.S. utility companies that offer much higher salaries for professionals at that level and most likely don't require the candidate to pack up and relocate overseas.

Terlaje said even though two top positions remain vacant, CUC has made some progress in making sure they move forward with Stipulated Order matters and other critical projects and priorities.

She noted that in the last eight months, CUC hired four personnel while one job offer remains pending acceptance by the candidate—all of which are critical positions under the Stipulated Order.

Terlaje said CUC employs several highly qualified and specialized professionals in compliance with their federal mandate.

"There are good people working at CUC. These true, dedicated professionals, along with our many qualified engineers and staff, who are part of our community and care about CUC and the people we serve, have been undeterred and have moved mountains to accomplish the many complex tasks laid out for us," she said.

Terlaje said they are currently united in completing an overall master plan. She said the plan will be factored into the cost-of-service study and consequently the strategic financial plan that the Stipulated Order mandates.

Terlaje said the EPA and CUC's federal partners have always proven to be helpful allies in bringing CUC into compliance with the Stipulated Orders, whether by providing guidance, funding, or other means.

## E-GAMING

*From page 3*

time when the same Garapan area was crowded with hostess bars and other adult activities. During those years, he said, families avoided walking through the area after dark. He said those establishments are now gone.

Guerrero said there is an opportunity to push the Garapan area upmarket, but the presence of e-gaming lounges will prevent the improvements that the area desperately needs, as lower end activities are frequently associated with undesirable individuals and criminal activities.

Guerrero said the Chamber supports the Legislature's efforts to find creative ways to grow government revenues, but this bill will likely have the opposite effect, damaging tourism and negatively impacting the effort to upgrade the Garapan area.

Based on the current e-gaming law, he said, there are nine beachside hotel properties that could offer e-gaming to their guests. None of these properties do offer that and one of them that previously offered this activity is now closed, with no plans to reopen, Guerrero said.

"If in fact e-gaming was attractive to tourists, certainly one of the nine would offer it today," he pointed out.

# US will resume Peace Corps program in Palau

**WASHINGTON (AP)—**The United States will resume a long-suspended Peace Corps program in the North Pacific island of Palau as the Biden administration continues moves to counter growing Chinese influence in the region.

The Peace Corps said Friday that it would start sending volunteers back to the island in 2025 following an agreement reached between the agency's director and Palau's president, whose country is one of the few in the world to have diplomatic relations with Taiwan.

**» As it moves to counter Chinese influence in Indo-Pacific**

AP

This June 20, 2009, file photo shows the Palau Capital building,in Melekeok, Palau. The United States will resume a long-suspended Peace Corps program in the North Pacific island of Palau as the Biden administration continues moves to counter growing Chinese influence in the region.

"Volunteers will live and work side-by-side with community partners to improve childhood literacy and math and science skills, along with teaching English as a foreign language," Peace Corps director Carol Spahn said in a statement.

Palau's president, Surangel Whipps, said the return of the Peace Corps reflects the strong relationship between his nation and the United States. He said prior Peace Corps members had become "an integral part of our national family," and he extended his gratitude to them and to a program he said "has enriched our country in countless ways."

"To those Peace Corps members preparing to come and contribute to Palau," Whipps said, "welcome home."

The Peace Corps programs in Palau and in the Federated States of Micronesia began in 1966 but were shut down in 2014 after more than 4,400 volunteers had served there.

Since then, as China has made successful inroads in the Pacific, successive U.S. administrations have sought to improve relations with the island nations, including by opening or reopening several embassies and renegotiating cooperation agreements known as compacts of free association last year with Palau, Micronesia and the Marshall Islands.

Palau is among the 12 countries that still recognize Taiwan's statehood and do not have diplomatic relations with Beijing, which considers Taiwan to be part of Chinese territory. The U.S. has encouraged these countries to maintain formal ties with the self-governed island.

Peace Corps officials said they hope that with congressional funding the Palau reopening will be the first of several new programs it will restart in the Pacific.

The Peace Corps, a creation of the John F. Kennedy administration, currently has Pacific island programs in Fiji, Samoa, Tonga and Vanuatu.

# *Inafa'måoli-Tipiyee* Project deadline extended to Feb. 21

By CHRYSTAL MARINO
chrystal_marino@saipantribune.com
CORRESPONDENT

To accommodate more aspiring student participants, the Northern Marianas Humanities Council has extended the submission deadline for its *Inafa'måolik-Tipiyeew* Matters project to Feb. 21, 2024.

The initiative, whose initial deadline was set on Feb. 14, will now continue to accept entries until Feb. 21, 2024. Designed to delve into the cultural intricacies of the CNMI community, it invites 25 high school and college students from Saipan, Tinian, and Rota to engage in filmed interviews as part of the project's extensive data collection.

This deadline extension allows students to take advantage of this unique opportunity to contribute to the documentation and understanding of the Northern Marianas' cultural mosaic.

Aligned with its overarching goals, IT Matters seeks to uncover the rich tapestry of community values within the CNMI. From documenting cultural values of distinct groups to exploring shared themes and ultimately presenting oral and visual representations, the project is poised to capture the essence of the Northern Marianas.

Additionally, the project aims to shed light on the attitudes, perspectives, and experiences contributing to conflicts among CNMI cultural groups. From analyzing persistent stigmas and stereotypes to unraveling the historical events shaping present-day relations, IT Matters is set to navigate the complex dynamics within the Chamorro and Carolinian communities.

For students passionate about the project's mission, the incentive is significant. All recruited participants will receive a $500 stipend, underscoring the commitment to involve the youth in this cultural exploration.

To ensure the effectiveness of the interviews, participants are required to attend an "Effective Interviewing Strategies" workshop. The desired background skills include an interest in Chamorro and Refalúwasch cultural values, basic video capturing and editing proficiency, and access to a smartphone or other devices with suitable video quality.

Submission requirements are straightforward. Prospective participants must be CNMI students, complete the IT Matters Google form, and submit a letter of interest detailing their connection to Chamorro and/or Refalúwasch people and culture. The letter should also outline plans to interview three individuals and reasons for their selection. As a demonstration of skills, a 30-second video clip showcasing capturing and editing abilities is also required.

# GCC announces opening of first Plumbing Bootcamp

Guam Community College Office of Continuing Education and Workforce Development is now accepting applications for the upcoming Plumbing Bootcamp.

Training will commence on March 5, 2024, and end on May 24, 2024. The deadline to apply is 5pm, Friday, Feb. 23, 2024. Interested participants are encouraged to sign up early as seats are limited to 20 individuals.

Participants in the bootcamp will receive training in Fundamentals of Plumbing, Plumbing I, Heartsaver First Aid, CPR & AED, WorkKeys, Work Ethic, and OSHA.

Applicants must meet the minimum requirements:

- 18+ years of age
- High school graduate or equivalent
- Receive GCC health clearance
- Unemployed/underemployed

For inquiries call, CEWD at 735-5640 ext. 5412 or email, workforce@guamcc.edu. To apply schedule an appointment at Guam Department of Labor's American Job Center @ (671) 475-7000/01 or email ajc.training@dol.guam.gov. ***(PR)***

# 6.0-magnitude earthquake hits Colonia

At 9:40pm on Feb. 14, 2024, a report of a 6.0-magnitude earthquake occurred 172 kilometers north northeast of Colonia, Federated States of Micronesia. Currently, there are no tsunami warnings or advisories that were issued by the Pacific Tsunami Warning Center.

For more information, please contact the CNMI EOC State Warning Point at (670) 237-8000. ***(PR)***

## CNMI SCHOLARSHIP OFFICE

P.O. Box 5729 CHRB I Saipan, MP 96950 I Capitol Hill, Building #1326 I No. (670) 664-4750

February 8, 2024

Pursuant to the CNMI Scholarship Office (CSO) Board of Directors Bylaws 8.04 Special Meeting, the CNMI CSO Board of Directors is hereby giving notice that it will hold its special meeting on Wednesday, February 21, 2024 at 12:00pm. The meeting will be held via conference call.

**AGENDA**

I. Meeting Call to Order

II. Determination of Quorum

III. Urgent Business
a. FY2025 Budget Proposal

IV. Announcements & Next Meeting Date

V. Adjournment of Meeting

/s/ Donna M. Flores, Chairwoman

Website: www.cnmischolarship.net | Facebook & Instagram @CnmiScholarshipOffice

## COMMONWEALTH UTILITIES CORPORATION

### REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS
### CUC-RFP-24-014
### PURCHASE AND INSTALLATION OF A NEW 2MW GENSET UNIT FOR ROTA POWER PLANT

The Office of the Executive Director, Commonwealth Utilities Corporation (CUC), is soliciting competitive sealed proposals from qualified Contractors or Vendors for the purchase and installation of a new genset for the Rota Power Plant located in Songsong, Rota. The purchase of and installation of the new genset with approximately 2MW of total net output will improve CUC current power generation capacity needed to sustain critical electrical services to the community of Rota.

The RFP Package may be obtained from the CUC Procurement and Supply Office, 3rd Floor, Room No. 3, Joeten Dandan Commercial Building, Saipan, between 7:30 a.m. to 11:30 a.m. and 12:30 p.m. to 4:30 p.m., Monday through Friday, except on government observed holidays, upon completion of registration for one RFP package set. Prospective proposers must pre-register with the CUC Procurement & Supply Division by **March 8, 2024** to be considered.

A Pre-proposal Conference will be held on **February 22, 2024 at 9:00 AM (CHST)** at the CUC Main Conference Room, 3rd Floor, Room No.17, Joeten Dandan Commercial Building.

**One (1) original and five (5) hard copies** of your submission must be submitted in a sealed envelope marked **"CUC-RFP-24-014, Purchase and Installation of a 2MW New Genset Unit for the Rota Power Plant"** to the CUC Procurement & Supply Office, 3rd Floor, Room No. 3, Joeten Dandan Commercial Building, P.O. Box 501220, Saipan, MP 96950, no later than **10:00 A.M.(ChST) on March 19, 2024.** Proposals mailed via postal or courier service must be received on or before the due date and time.

All Offerors are advised that CUC assumes no responsibility in any act of omission on the part of the Offeror due to lack of information or understanding of the proposal requirements in the course of Contractor's preparation of a proposal or supply under the contract.

Discussions may be conducted with responsible proposers for the purpose of clarification and to ensure full understanding of, and responsiveness to solicitation requirements. Proposers shall be accorded fair and equal treatment. There shall be no disclosure of any information derived from proposals submitted by competing proposers.

All responses to this RFP should take into account any and all taxes which will become the obligation of the proposer awarded a contract.

This Request for Proposal does not commit CUC to the award of a contract or contracts, nor to pay any cost incurred in the preparation and submission of proposals in anticipation of a contract. This request and the ensuing contract shall be executed pursuant to the CUC Procurement Regulations. The contractor shall be required to comply with all CNMI and applicable Federal Laws.

Questions or requests for clarification will be entertained only from pre-registered prospective proposers and must be submitted in writing no later than **10:00 AM (ChST) on February 27, 2024,** to Manny B. Sablan, CUC Purchasing Administrator via email address manny.sablan@cucgov.org, with a copy to Alvin King, CUC Rota Resident Manager at alvin.king@cucgov.org, Richard Cano, CUC Power Generation Manager at richard.cano@cucgov.org and Marcela Tenorio, Senior Administrative Technician at marcela.tenorio@cucgov.org.

CUC reserves the right to reject any or all proposals for any reason and to waive any defects in said proposal, if in its sole opinion, to do so would be in the best interest of CUC. All proposals shall become the property of CUC.

BETTINA G. TERLAJE
Acting Executive Director

MANNY B. SABLAN
Purchasing Administrator

# USCIS reduced its backlog for the first time in over a decade

**WASHINGTON, D.C.**—U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services is releasing end of fiscal year 2023 data that illustrate the agency's progress in meeting its strategic priorities. The USCIS workforce has worked tirelessly over the past year to uphold America's promise as a nation of welcome and possibility by reducing backlogs, improving customer experience, addressing humanitarian needs, and strengthening employment-based immigration.

"I'm so proud of the USCIS workforce and our dedication to fairness, integrity, and respect for all we serve," said USCIS director Ur M. Jaddou. "We've completed a record number of cases, responded to emerging crises around the globe with essential humanitarian relief, and applied innovative solutions to improve customer experience and reduce backlogs."

» Completes unprecedented 10 million

### Reducing backlogs

In fiscal year 2023, USCIS received 10.9 million filings and completed more than 10 million pending cases—both record-breaking numbers in the agency's history. In doing so, USCIS reduced overall backlogs by 15%.

Among USCIS' record number of case completions in fiscal year 2023, the agency administered the Oath of Allegiance to more than 878,500 new U.S. citizens, including 12,000 members of the military, effectively eliminating the backlog of naturalization applications .

The median processing time for naturalization applicants decreased from 10.5 months to 6.1 months by the end of the fiscal year, achieving the agency's longstanding goal and significantly reducing waiting times for most individuals seeking U.S. citizenship.

### Improving customer experience

USCIS implemented several new technology solutions that meaningfully advance the customer experience for those navigating our immigration system.

Our new self-service tool for online rescheduling of biometrics appointments was used to reschedule over 33,000 such appointments in fiscal year 2023.

Our new enterprise change of address capabilities enabled over 430,000 address changes to be submitted online through Dec. 2023. This tool is expected to reduce USCIS Contact Center phone inquiries by up to 31%, or approximately 1.5 million inquiries annually.

From August to September 2023, USCIS received more than 16,000 field office appointment requests using our online request form, while a new text-ahead capability for callers to our 1-800 number gives them a more predictable call-back window and reduces missed calls.

### Strengthening immigration for workers and employers

In fiscal year 2023, USCIS and the Department of State helped meet the needs of U.S. employers by issuing more than 192,000 employment-based immigrant visas—far above the pre-pandemic number—and, for the second year running ensured that no available visas went unused.

The agency further supported U.S. employers and noncitizen workers in fiscal year 2023 by increasing the maximum validity period of Employment Authorization Documents to five years for adjustment of status applicants.

We clarified eligibility for a range of immigration services, including the International Entrepreneur Rule, the EB-1 immigrant visa for individuals of extraordinary ability and outstanding professors and researchers, and the waiver of the two-year foreign residence requirement for J-1 cultural and educational exchange visitors (including foreign medical graduates).

We proposed a new rule to strengthen worker protections and the integrity of the H-2 temporary worker program.

USCIS also removed the biometrics fee and appointment requirement for applicants for a change or extension of nonimmigrant status and updated the agency's interpretation of the Child Status Protection Act to prevent many child beneficiaries of noncitizen workers from "aging out" of child status, allowing them to seek permanent residence along with their parents.

### Fulfilling our humanitarian mission

USCIS continues to address growing humanitarian needs around the globe, as individuals seek protection in the United States from oppression, violence, and other urgent circumstances. At a time when the world is experiencing the greatest displacement of people since World War II, our agency's dedicated employees continue to advance our humanitarian mission and provide protection to vulnerable populations.

USCIS interviewed over 100,000 refugee applicants—more than double the amount completed in the previous fiscal year—resulting in the admission and resettlement of over 60,000 refugees.

As of the end of fiscal year 2023, USCIS completed more than 52,000 asylum cases; this included prioritizing process of asylum cases for Afghan alliance and their families.

USCIS also completed a record-breaking 146,000 credible fear and reasonable fear screenings of individuals expressing a fear of return after being encountered at the border.

In fiscal year 2023, USCIS continued to support Biden-Harris Administration efforts to establish lawful pathways that allow for the safe and orderly processing of individuals into the United States through the implementation of new processes for Cubans, Haitians, Nicaraguans, and Venezuelans; the creation of new family reunification processes for individuals from Colombia, El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras, and the modernization of existing processes for Cuba and Haiti; and by maintaining support for the Uniting for Ukraine process. As of the end of fiscal year 2023, more than 150,000 Ukrainian nationals and their immediate family members had entered the United States under the U4U process and nearly 238,000 individuals through the CHNV process.

USCIS is also a key partner in the Safe Mobility Office initiative, one of the many ways the United States is facilitating access to safe and lawful pathways in partner countries in Central and South America to prevent refugees and vulnerable migrants from undertaking dangerous journeys and discourage criminal smugglers who endanger the lives of vulnerable noncitizens.

USCIS also announced enhancements to the Central American Minors Program, including expanding eligibility criteria for such children to qualify for access to the U.S. Refugee Admissions Program.

USCIS announced the creation of its sixth service center, the Humanitarian, Adjustment, Removing Conditions, and Travel Documents Service Center, which focuses on adjudicating benefits requests filed by vulnerable populations. USCIS made significant strides in recruiting, hiring, onboarding, and training new hires, growing the HART Service Center by almost 90% in FY23, and enhancing agency capabilities to adjudicate humanitarian and related cases.

### Looking ahead

In fiscal year 2024, the agency is continuing to build on this progress while monitoring and addressing remaining processing delays. USCIS will work to maintain the median processing times of 30 days for certain EAD applications filed by individuals who entered the United States after scheduling an appointment through the CBP One mobile application or through the CHNV processes. The agency also proposed new rules to modernize and improve the efficiency and integrity of the H-1B program for specialty occupation workers. USCIS will work to maintain naturalization processing times and utilize all available employment-based visas.

As a fee-funded agency, USCIS achieved all these accomplishments within the constraints of a fee schedule that was last updated in 2016. We announced a new fee schedule that allows USCIS to more fully recover our operating costs, reestablish and maintain timely case processing, support the development and implementation of tools that further increase our efficiency and improve the customer experience, and help prevent the accumulation of future case backlogs. We continue to call on Congress to pass the Administration's supplemental funding request, including additional resources for USCIS to cover projected shortfalls and hire additional personnel.

USCIS will continue to build capacity for processing historically high referrals for protection screenings at the southern border, while focusing remaining resources on the unprecedented number of pending affirmative asylum applications. USCIS will continue to increase refugee adjudications to support the target of admitting 125,000 refugees this fiscal year. USCIS also plans to increase refugee processing in the Western Hemisphere through the Safe Mobility Office initiative and is on track to admit between 35,000 and 50,000 refugees from the Western Hemisphere this fiscal year, the largest number from this region in history.

To enhance accessibility for those we serve, USCIS will also continue efforts to expand our international footprint outside the United States and remains committed to Operation Enduring Welcome for Afghan allies. USCIS will also invest additional resources to stand up the HART Service Center.

Finally, USCIS will implement new online filing tools to enhance the customer experience, including adding organizational accounts, launching online filing of H-1B petitions on Form I-129, Petition for a Nonimmigrant Worker, and adding an additional electronic intake channel for submission of forms and evidence in PDF format. ***(USCIS)***

# Bill removes statute of limitations on financial and property exploitation, abuse of *man'amko*, and person with disability

**HAGATNA. Guam**—Democrat Sen. Dwayne T.D. San Nicolas introduced Bill 243-37, an act removing the statute of limitations for financial and property exploitation of an elderly person or individual with disability.

San Nicolas

According to the National Council on Aging, up to five million older Americans are abused every year, and the annual loss by victims of financial abuse is estimated to be at least $36.5 billion. The council also states that in about 60% of elderly abuse incidents, the perpetrator is a family member, usually the spouse or the children of the victim.

"The number of exploited elderly is astounding and justifies the creation of legislation to combat this issue," said San Nicolas, author of Bill 243-37, a first of its kind in the nation. "All of these findings by the National Council on Aging are alarming, something which our *man'amko* and persons with disabilities need to be protected from by putting the law on their side. Financial exploitation of our *man'amko* and individuals with disabilities is a heinous crime that should not have a statute of limitations."

If enacted into Guam law, this legislation will remove the statute of limitations in cases of elderly and disabled individuals' financial exploitation and abuse. With this legislative measure, elderly and individuals with disabilities, victims of financial exploitation and abuse, will be able to pursue justice without the added worry of a deadline to file a lawsuit.

"As a government entity that serves the people, the Guam Legislature needs to enact legislation that would protect and help the *man'amko* and people with disabilities find justice in incidents of financial exploitation and abuse," he said.

Sen. William A. Parkinson is a co-sponsor of the bill. This shall become effective upon enactment. ***(PR)***

# Emperor Naruhito of Japan's 64th Birthday Celebration

PHOTOS BY CHRYSTAL MARINO

Information and snacks on Saipan's sister city Katori were available for guests to take during Emperor Naruhito of Japan's 64th birthday celebration last Thursday at the Grandvrio Resort Saipan in Garapan.

Gov. Arnold I. Palacios gives his remarks at Emperor Naruhito of Japan's birthday celebration last Thursday at the Grandvrio Resort in Garapan.

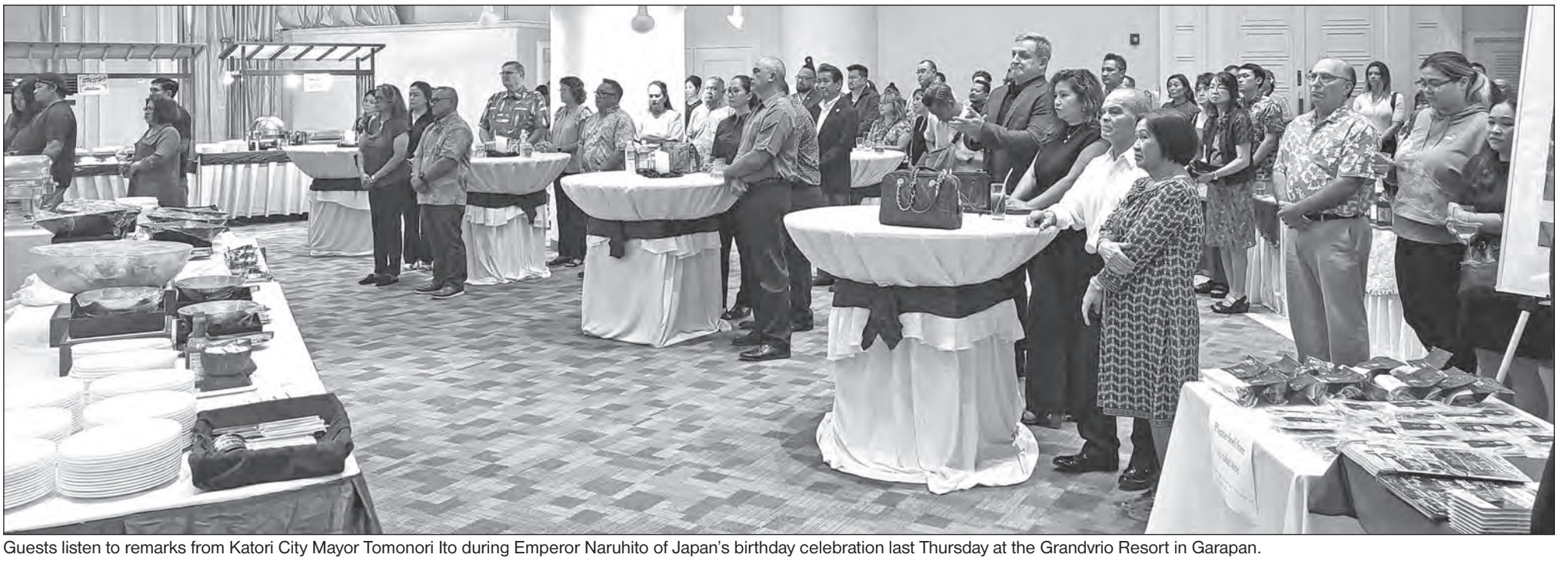
Japan Consul Ryoji Takagaki gives his remarks during Emperor Naruhito of Japan's birthday celebration last Thursday at the Grandvrio Resort in Garapan.

Lt. Gov. David M. Apatang gives a toast in honor of His Majesty Emperor Naruhito of Japan during the emperor's 64th birthday celebration last Thursday at the Grandvrio Resort in Garapan.

Guests enjoy Japanese dishes during Emperor Naruhito of Japan's birthday celebration last Thursday at the Grandvrio Resort in Garapan.

Guests and dignitaries pack the Hibiscus Hall of the Grandvrio Resort in Garapan during Emperor Naruhito of Japan's 64th birthday celebration last Thursday.

From left, members of the Japanese Society of the Northern Marianas Motono Higuchi, Ayumi Litulumar, Hiroko Tenorio, Masanori Taka Hashi, Kaoru Taka Hashi, and Mikiko Martin pose with Marianas Visitors Authority managing director Chris Concepción, center, during Emperor Naruhito of Japan's birthday celebration last Thursday at the Grandvrio Resort in Garapan.



Guests listen to remarks from Katori City Mayor Tomonori Ito during Emperor Naruhito of Japan's birthday celebration last Thursday at the Grandvrio Resort in Garapan.

# Opinion

Hafa Adai!
Saipan Tribune
THE CNMI'S FIRST DAILY NEWSPAPER
Volume XXXIV, Issue No. 36

Published daily at 2/F JP Center,
Beach Road, Garapan, Saipan, CNMI
Mailing Address: PMB 34, Box 10001, Saipan, MP, 96950

**Mark Rabago** EDITOR
mark_rabago@saipantribune.com

MEMBER

The Associated Press | Pacific Islands News Association

EDITORIAL

## Half the KC Chiefs rally shooting victims were kids. Could the Missouri GOP care less?

Even after at least nine children were treated for gunshot wounds at a Kansas City hospital, Missouri Republicans still won't address the state's loose gun laws.

And that stubborn resistance to reform is irresponsible if not outright dangerous.

One day after a mass shooting in Kansas City left one woman dead and 22 others injured by gunfire, including nearly a dozen minors under the age of 16, top GOP lawmakers and Gov. Mike Parson shrugged their shoulders at the calamity.

From the governor to House Speaker Dean Plocher to other elected officials such as state Sen. Bill Eigel of Charles County, the tone-deaf reaction to the shooting from leading Republicans wasn't all that surprising.

When it comes to sensible gun laws, the GOP-controlled General Assembly reacts with the stubbornness of a Missouri mule, the state's official animal. And that bullheadedness was on full display Thursday.

During an interview with a local radio host in Kansas City, Parson never bothered to use the word "gun." He did, however, use language we all should condemn when describing the suspects.

"What happened yesterday with those thugs is not who we are in Missouri," Parson told radio host Pete Mundo of KCMO Talk Radio.

Dog whistle? You bet. We found it difficult to ignore Parson's screed, which continued: "You just got some absolutely—be careful what I say before I say something I'm gonna probably regret—but just a bunch of criminals, thugs out there, just killing people at an incident like that and attempting to kill all those people and created such chaos that people got hurt, being trampled."

On X, formerly known as Twitter, Eigel, a candidate for Missouri governor, echoed Parson's questionable talking points, erroneously writing: "One good guy with a gun could have stopped the evil criminals who opened fire on the crowd immediately. Guns don't kill people. Thugs and criminals kill people."

More than 800 law enforcement officials worked the Chiefs Super Bowl victory parade, according to Kansas City police. Not even a heavy police presence could deter these shooters from opening fire, debunking this stale good guy with a gun myth.

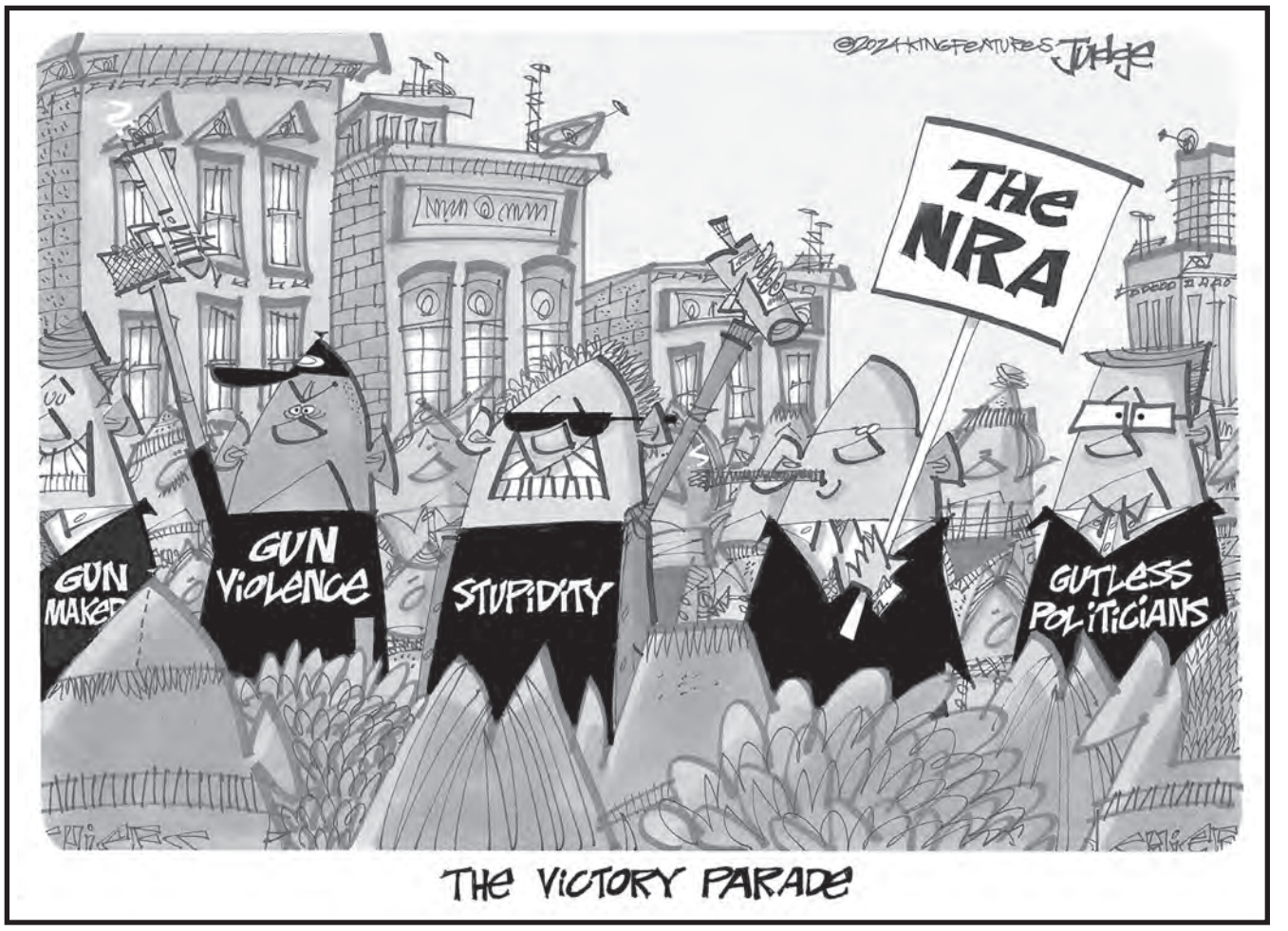
Firearm safety is not a partisan issue

From what we can best tell, early reports indicate Trey Filter of Maize, Kansas, tackled a person suspected of being involved in this shooting. Filter's wife, Casey Filter, was involved, too. Neither used a weapon to take down the figure seen on video running from the scene.

And then there was Plocher, the top Republican lawmaker in Missouri's House of Representatives.

On Thursday, he refused to answer questions from a Kansas City Star reporter about the state's lax gun laws. When pressed about the Union Station shooting, Plocher shut down a news conference. He said little about plans to prevent another mass shooting.

*See HALF on Page 9*




## The one big thing Democrats and Republicans agree on

**By CLIVE CROOK**
Bloomberg Opinion

*Clive Crook is a* Bloomberg Opinion *columnist and member of the editorial board covering economics. Previously, he was deputy editor of the* Economist *and chief Washington commentator for the* Financial Times.

One of the few things Democrats and Republicans appear to agree on is that fiscal responsibility is for losers. As a result, the country's looming financial breakdown gets barely a mention as this year's elections approach. This month's bracing projections on the deficit from the Congressional Budget Office (CBO), for instance, passed almost unnoticed. How long this studied inattention can be sustained or what it will take to get Washington even talking about solutions is anybody's guess. Meantime, the odds of an outright fiscal crisis within the next few years are rising steadily.

The CBO now expects a deficit of $1.6 trillion, or 5.6% of gross domestic product, for the current fiscal year. That's for an economy at full employment and growing pretty well. Under current law, the gap between spending and taxes keeps widening over the next decade, rising to $2.6 trillion, or 6.2% of GDP, by 2034. Despite steady economic growth, debt will rise from 97% of GDP this year to 116%. From there, it just keeps going up.

Believe it or not, this is a rosy scenario in at least two ways. First, the outlook includes no recession. The pandemic crushed output and demanded strong fiscal stimulus—a combination that added 20 percentage points to the debt ratio in a single year. The next economic setback is a matter of when, not if. Even a much milder reversal than that of 2020 would push the numbers forcefully in the wrong direction.

Second, the CBO's "current law" forecast includes an unlikely degree of scheduled tightening. The projection assumes that caps on discretionary spending introduced last year will be maintained and that the Trump administration's 2017 tax cuts will expire in 2025 as the law promised. A more plausible "current policy" forecast might let public spending grow in line with the economy (as it usually does) and assume that tax rates won't rise automatically (as they usually don't). In that scenario, debt climbs to more than 130% of GDP by 2034 and keeps climbing more steeply thereafter, again assuming uninterrupted economic growth.

Didn't Congress pass the Fiscal Responsibility Act last year—proving, in fact, that it recognizes the problem and is willing to do something about it? Well, the FRA did help, a bit. The aforementioned spending caps and other tweaks (if maintained) lower the deficit by about $150 billion a year. In other words, without the FRA, the ten-year deficit would not be roughly $19 trillion, as the CBO projects, but a little more than $20 trillion. The measure failed to restore any semblance of balance. If Washington can't summon a lot more fiscal responsibility than this, the economy really is in trouble.

The crux of the matter is that the parties have very different fiscal preferences, except when it comes to the need to curb borrowing. Republicans want lower taxes and lower spending. Democrats want higher spending and higher taxes (on companies and the rich). How to strike a deal? Easy. Cut taxes and raise spending—hence higher borrowing. This appeals to voters and offers, forgive the expression, the default option.

An impressively large bipartisan majority in the House of Representatives recently passed a bill that encapsulates the problem. It combined a big increase in the Child Tax Credit with more generous corporate-tax treatment of R&D and other capital spending. The first gives poor families a "refund" of taxes they aren't required to pay—public spending disguised as tax reform—and was long sought by Democrats. The other is a tax preference for some kinds of investment, which Republicans think is good for growth. Taken in isolation, both parts are actually good policy. The CTC reform is an effective, well-targeted anti-poverty measure; accelerated depreciation is good for investment, and investment is good for growth. But the package will increase public borrowing and debt, and it needs to be paid for.

The signature move was for the House to pretend it had taken care of that. The fiscal gimmickry involves deeming the CTC expansion and the corporate-tax relief temporary, while offsetting their costs with savings from payments of the pandemic-era Employee Retention Credit. Yet the CTC and corporate-tax changes aren't really intended to be temporary, whereas the ERC savings are necessarily once and for all. It's the old "current law" versus "current policy" ploy, one of the main devices that policymakers have used to set aside disagreements and get things done, as they claim—thereby digging the country into this ever-deepening fiscal hole.

The consensus supporting fiscal irresponsibility is embedding rising public debt into the very structure of the US economy. Every year's delay in addressing the problem makes it harder to solve. At some point, the fiscal outlook will start to drive long-term interest rates higher, which adds to the debt, which worsens the outlook, and so on. In the end, without strong action, the result will either be a fiscal collapse of the kind seen elsewhere but not in the US, or else the dreaded "fiscal dominance" through which the Federal Reserve inflates away the debt burden by letting prices rip.

It's worthy of discussion, don't you think?

**EDITORIAL POLICY** Letters to the editor must include the NAME, VILLAGE ADDRESS, and CONTACT NUMBER of the contributor. Letters that do not have these information will immediately be trashed. Contributions consisting of 500 words or less have more chances of getting published. The *Saipan Tribune* reserves the right to publish a contribution or not; the right to edit submissions for length, accuracy, and clarity; and the right to publish and distribute contributions in print, electronic, or other media formats. Submissions may be sent via snail mail to the 2nd Floor, JP Center, Beach Road, Garapan, Saipan, 96950; fax (670) 235-3740; e-mail to editor@saipantribune.com; or through our website at www.saipantribune.com.

# How the massive New York business fraud verdict will do real damage to Trump's empire

**By HARRY LITMAN**
Los Angeles Times

*Harry Litman is the host of the* Talking Feds *podcast. @harrylitman*

Over the course of an 11-week fraud trial before New York Justice Arthur Engoron, Donald Trump practically begged for a harsh verdict. On Friday, he got his wish and then some.

Engoron issued a scathing 92-page decision that ordered Trump and his co-defendants to pay $364 million for defrauding the people of New York. And that gargantuan figure actually understates the price tag: With the addition of prejudgment interest required under New York law, Trump is looking at closer to $500 million.

Combined with the $83 million a jury ordered Trump to pay last month for defaming the writer E. Jean Carroll, the former president faces a financial hit that exceeds even his own likely inflated account of his empire's cash on hand.

Like Carroll, the people of New York might not see the money soon; Trump has promised to appeal the verdict, though he will have to pay the penalty or at least secure a bond to do so.

The decision nevertheless delivers real accountability for a man who has managed to dodge it again and again. Engoron's opinion pillories Trump for his unresponsive, stream-of-consciousness testimony and seems to regard him as a truant child in need of unstinting oversight and stern punishment.

While the financial aspect of the penalty captured the headlines, it's just one of several ways in which Engoron clobbered the former president.

The verdict further punishes Trump with a loss of control over his business. Engoron appointed a second monitor, styled as an independent director of compliance, to join former judge Barbara Jones in overseeing Trump's empire. The net effect is that Trump, after a lifetime of doing whatever he felt like regardless of the rules, will have to come down from his perch and ask someone else's permission for all sorts of previously unilateral business decisions, at least in New York.

Engoron put the remedy into place to safeguard assets now provisionally owed to the people of the state. They're no longer Trump's to do with as he likes.

The judge further prohibited Trump from serving as a director or officer of any New York company for three years. That means he can't try to maneuver his way out of trouble and oversight by forming another company.

The opinion also constitutes a body blow to the brand that Trump has spent a lifetime mythologizing. Titans of commerce don't tend to cough up huge fraud judgments or ask anyone's permission to write a check.

The extent to which the Trump brand is propped up by lies has always been open to question. After the verdict, the brand is propped up by even less.

Nor was Engoron's judgment limited to Trump himself. His sons also face large financial penalties and are barred from holding senior offices in any New York business for two years.

And Trump's troubles are really only beginning. The day before the verdict, another New York judge ordered him to stand trial next month in the Stormy Daniels hush money case, which could result in a felony conviction and even a jail sentence. Also on the horizon are three other criminal trials, civil litigation over the events of Jan. 6, 2021, and the results of a potentially devastating tax audit.

Even his only apparent long-term defense strategy—returning to the White House to avoid further prosecution—would fail to undo a lot of the damage.

Engoron's stinging verdict left no doubt that Trump's characteristic arrogance and slash-and-burn politics played a significant role in the judgment. The judge noted his "complete lack of contrition and remorse," which he said "borders on the pathological."

In this respect, he compared Trump unfavorably with the criminal mastermind Bernie Madoff, who at least had the humility to appreciate the damage he had inflicted and apologize to the court and his victims.

Trump, by contrast, has only one speed. He can be counted on to continue to approach the campaign and his serial court appearances with his signature brand of in-your-face, outrageously dishonest braggadocio. If the other cases go the way this one did, it may yet prove to be his undoing.

## HALF

*From page 8*

"Laws alone don't solve the problem," Plocher said, later adding: "We're not going to dwell on Kansas City today."

If the day after a mass shooting wasn't the appropriate time to address gun violence, when would be a convenient time to discuss this pressing issue, Speaker? Your abject failure of leadership must be called out.

Gun safety is not a matter of right versus left or conservative versus liberal. Nor should the debate fall along party lines. When kids are seriously injured by gunfire and an innocent mother is killed, lawmakers have a duty to address ways to prevent these sorts of shootings.

Not in Missouri, though. This week, lawmakers doubled down on the state's gun laws, rated the nation's 38th weakest by Everytown for Gun Safety, a gun safety think tank. Only 12 other states have weaker legislation.

Worse, some GOP lawmakers seek to allow concealed carry on public transit and inside churches and other places of worship. We will monitor House Bill 1708 which aims to further relax gun laws in our state. Earlier this month, the measure, sponsored by Republican state Rep. Adam Schnelting of St. Charles, was placed on the House calendar for perfection.

Here, no permit is necessary for anyone over the age of 18 to carry a concealed weapon. No training is required either. Background checks are not mandated. According to anti-gun violence advocates with Everytown for Gun Safety and the Missouri NAACP, this unfettered access to guns contributed to a record number of homicides in Kansas City—185 killings were recorded just last year.

Half of firearm violence victims under 16

Kansas City's mass shooting victims ranged from 8 to 47, according to Kansas City Police. Half of the victims were under 16.

Lisa Lopez-Galvan, a 44-year-old Johnson County mother of two, was shot and died on the grounds of Union Station after the victory parade and rally ended, her brother Beto Lopez told The Star.

A Leavenworth family and others were among a total of 39 people treated for various injuries related to the shooting.

Three juveniles were detained in Wednesday's mass shooting, according to police. As of Thursday, no charges had been announced.

Liberals are not coming for your guns

Law-abiding citizens in Missouri who own guns need not worry. No one—not even the federal government—has a right to take your firearm from you, a long-held argument and perhaps the biggest misconception about the right to bear arms.

But people under 21 should not have the right to carry a concealed handgun or rifle without the proper training, permit or a background check.

Allowing unchecked access to weapons is as much to blame for Wednesday's mass shooting in Kansas City as any other underlying factor.

Will Republicans in Missouri see it that way? Based on Thursday's reaction, our guess is no.

We call on elected officials in Missouri to set partisan politics aside and do what's best for all Missourians: Enact sensible reform to the state's concealed weapons law.

More guns on the streets will not make us safer.

©2024 The Kansas City Star

**BLACK HISTORY MONTH**

# Song Lyrics: Assassination and Murder Part 1

**LITERARY NOOK**

**By JOEY CONNOLLY**
Special to the Saipan Tribune

*Joey aka Pepe Batbon Connolly is a retired educator who taught in the CNMI, NOLA, and LVNV. He is a sonnet practitioner who enjoys stargazing.*

Black History is documented in many ways and many forms of music and literature: opera, movies, film documentaries, word of mouth, TV, books, poetry, etc. Several genres and styles of music portray Black History: work songs, field hollers, delta blues, jazz, R&B, pop, soul, reggae, calypso, gospel, rap, and hip hop.

After the assassination of MLK in 1968, poignant tributes in music and song poured out about our nation's tragic loss. Nina Simone wrote and sang Why *(The King of Love Is Dead)*. She also had a powerful emotional hit titled *Mississippi Goddam.* Marvin Gaye had a huge hit with *Abraham, Martin, and John*, written about assassinated U.S. Presidents' Abraham Lincoln and John F. Kennedy and Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King. Many musicians did covers of the song and sang it all over the world.

The previous poems in this month's series were about murders of Black Americans by white racists. A popular folk rock musician back then, Bob Dylan wrote songs about racial murders. Here is one:

### The Lonesome Death of Hattie Carroll

By BOB DYLAN
(*on Dylan's 1964 album* The Time's They Are A Changing)

William Zanzinger killed poor Hattie Carroll
With a cane that he twirled around his diamond ring finger
At a Baltimore hotel society gatherin'
And the cops were called in and his weapon took from him
As they rode him in custody down to the station
And booked William Zanzinger for first degree murder.

**(Chorus)**
But you who philosophize disgrace and criticize all fears
Take the rag away from your face, Now ain't the time for your tears

William Zanzinger, who at twenty-four years
Owns a tobacco farm of six hundred acres
With rich wealthy parents who provide and protect him
And high office relations in the politics of Maryland
Reacted to his deed with a shrug of his shoulders
And swear words and sneering and his tongue it was snarling
In a matter of minutes on bail was out walking

Hattie Carroll was a maid in the kitchen
She was fifty-one years old and gave birth to ten children
Who carried the dishes and took out the garbage
And never sat once at the head of the table
And emptied the ashtrays on a whole other level
Got killed by a blow, lay slain by a cane
That sailed through the air and came down through the room
Doomed and determined to destroy all the gentle
And she never done nothing to William Zanzinger

In the courtroom of honor, the judge pounded his gavel
To show that all's equal and that the laws on the level
And that the strings in the books ain't pulled and persuaded
And that even the nobles get properly handled
Once that the cops have chased after and caught 'em
And that the ladder of law has no top and no bottom
Stared at the person who killed for no reason
Who just happened to be feelin' that way without warnin'
And he spoke through his cloak, most deep and distinguished
And handed out strongly, for penalty and repentance
William Zanzinger with a six-month sentence

**(Chorus)**
Oh but you who philosophize disgrace and criticize all fears
Bury the rag deep in your face - For now's the time for your tears.

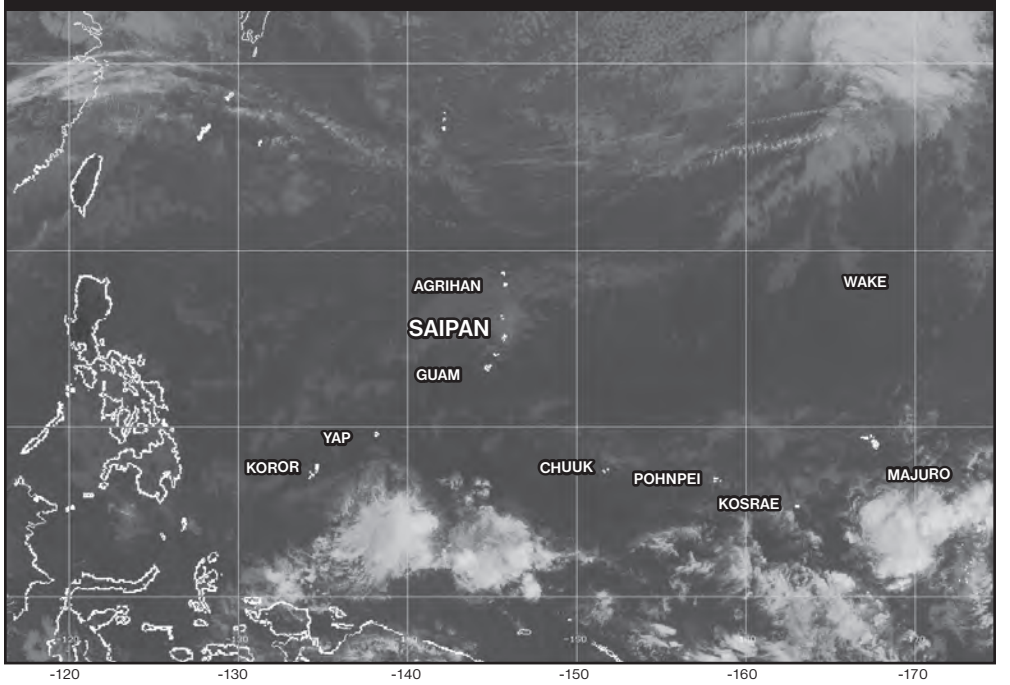
Part Two is a song about the assassination of Medgar Evers, who was a pioneering civil rights leader and the NAACP's first field secretary in the state of Mississippi.

# The Weather

## 5-DAY FORECAST FOR SAIPAN AND TINIAN

| TODAY | WEDNESDAY | THURSDAY | FRIDAY | SATURDAY |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Partly cloudy with isolated light showers. Northeast winds 15 to 20 mph. | Mostly cloudy with a 20 percent chance of showers. | Mostly cloudy with a 20 percent chance of showers. | Partly cloudy with a 20 percent chance of showers. | Partly cloudy with a 20 percent chance of showers. |
| 86 / 76° | 86 / 76° | 86 / 76° | 86 / 77° | 86 / 77° |

## YESTERDAY'S SATELLITE IMAGE




**PICTURE TIME: 6:15 AM MONDAY, FEBRUARY 19, 2024**

Western North Pacific between equator and 25N from 130E to 180.

Moderate to fresh trades prevail in the Marianas, as a lingering shearline fragment continues to bring increased shower coverage and cloudiness to the region. Tanapag buoy indicates seas are around 5 to 6 feet.

*Satellite image and accompanying information are provided by the National Weather Service. For an updated weather forecast, visit the National Weather Service Guam homepage: https://www.weather.gov/gum/*

| MICRONESIA | ▲ ▼ °F | |
|---|---|---|
| Guam and Rota | Showers | 86° / 77° |
| Palau | Thunderstorm | 85° / 77° |
| Yap | Thunderstorm | 85° / 78° |
| Chuuk | Partly Cloudy | 84° / 79° |
| Pohnpei | Thunderstorm | 84° / 78° |
| Kosrae | Thunderstorm | 84° / 78° |
| Majuro | Thunderstorm | 84° / 80° |

| DAY | SUNRISE | SUNSET |
|---|---|---|
| Today | 6:39 AM | 6:22 PM |
| Wednesday | 6:39 AM | 6:22 PM |
| Thursday | 6:38 AM | 6:22 PM |
| Friday | 6:38 AM | 6:22 PM |
| Saturday | 6:37 AM | 6:23 PM |

| DAY | MOONRISE | MOONSET | MOONRISE |
|---|---|---|---|
| Today | - | 3:26 AM | 2:45 PM |
| Wednesday | - | 4:18 AM | 3:40 PM |
| Thursday | - | 5:05 AM | 4:33 PM |
| Friday | - | 5:47 AM | 5:24 PM |
| Saturday | - | 6:25 AM | 6:13 PM |

| AROUND THE GLOBE | ▲ ▼ °F | |
|---|---|---|
| Auckland | Showers | 73° / 64° |
| Beijing | Fair | 48° / 34° |
| Hong Kong | Partly Cloudy | 76° / 68° |
| Honolulu | Fair/Wind | 74° / 68° |
| London | Cloudy | 50° / 41° |
| Los Angeles | Partly Cloudy | 62° / 44° |
| Manila | Partly Cloudy | 91° / 75° |
| Melbourne | Mostly Sunny | 90° / 66° |
| Miami | Partly Cloudy | 80° / 74° |
| New York | Clear | 40° / 26° |
| Osaka | Cloudy | 66° / 53° |
| Paris | Cloudy | 54° / 46° |
| Busan | Mostly Cloudy | 63° / 54° |
| Rome | Partly Cloudy | 57° / 43° |
| Salem | Cloudy | 79° / 60° |
| San Francisco | Mostly Sunny | 52° / 38° |
| Seoul | Cloudy | 52° / 45° |
| Tokyo | Cloudy | 64° /56° |
| Washington, DC | Clear | 49° / 28° |

| TIDES: SAIPAN HARBOR TODAY | | FEET |
|---|---|---|
| 6:47 AM | High Tide | 1.55 |
| 11:47 AM | Low Tide | 1.17 |
| 4:04 PM | High Tide | 1.49 |
| 11:55 PM | Low Tide | -0.26 |

**NEWS DESK** For news tips, corrections and requests for news coverage, call (670) 235-NEWS (6397), 235-2440, fax 235,3740. E-mail: editor@saipantribune.com. Website:www.saipantribune.com.

**CUSTOMER SERVICE** For inquiries, purchase of back issues and complaints, call (670) 235-8747, 235-2440, fax 235-3740.

**SUBSCRIPTION** Published Monday to Friday, Saipan Tribune offers door-to-door on-island delivery at an annual rate of $180. For additional subscription information, call (670) 235-8747 or 235-2769, or fax 235-3740.

**ADVERTISING** For inquiries contact (670) 235-2769. E-mail: sales@saipantribune.com

## FLIGHT SCHEDULE AS OF FEBRUARY 1, 2024

### DEPARTURES

**SAIPAN-GUAM (GUM)**

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| UA076 | 9:50AM | 10:35AM | Daily |

**SAIPAN- NARITA (NRT)**

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| UA824 | 7:05AM | 9:45AM | 1, 3, 5 |

**GUAM-MANILA (MNL)**

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| PR 111 | 5:55AM | 7:55AM | Daily |
| UA193 | 7:50PM | 11:50PM | 2, 5 via Palau |
| UA183 | 7:55PM | 9:50PM | Daily |

**SAIPAN-MANILA (MNL)**

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| OZ626/703 | 3:10AM | 10:30PM | 4, 7 via ICN |
| 7C3403/2305 | 4:40AM | 10:20PM | Daily |
| UA076/183 | 9:50AM | 9:50PM | Daily via Guam |
| UA076/193 | 9:50AM | 11:50PM | 2, 5 via Guam, Palau |

**SAIPAN-INCHEON (ICN)**

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| TW308 | 2:15AM | 6:10AM | Daily |
| OZ626 | 3:10AM | 6:55AM | 4,7 |
| 7C3403 | 4:40AM | 8:35AM | Daily |
| 7C3461 | 2:40PM | 6:45PM | Daily Feb 7-16 only |
| 7C3405 | 4:35PM | 8:25PM | Daily |

### ARRIVALS

**GUAM (GUM)-SAIPAN**

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| UA174 | 8:00AM | 8:45AM | Daily |

**NARITA (NRT)-SAIPAN**

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| UA825 | 9:25PM | 2:00AM+1 | 2, 4, 7 |

**MANILA (MNL)-GUAM**

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| UA189 | 00:40AM | 6:30AM | 3, 6 |
| PR110 | 10:05PM | 3:55AM+1 | Daily |
| UA192 | 10:40PM | 6:30AM+1 | 2, 5 via Palau |
| UA184 | 10:55PM | 4:45AM+1 | 1, 3, 4, 6, 7 |

**MANILA (MNL)-SAIPAN**

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| UA189/174 | 00:40AM | 8:45AM+1 | 3, 6 via Guam |
| OZ702/625 | 12:05PM | 1:40AM+1 | 3, 6 via ICN |
| UA192/174 | 10:40PM | 8:45AM+1 | 2, 5 via Palau, Guam |
| UA184/174 | 10:55PM | 8:45AM+1 | 1, 3, 4, 6,7 via Guam |
| 7C2306/3462 | 11:15PM | 1:30PM+1 | Daily Feb 7-16 only |
| 7C2306/3406 | 11:15PM | 3:30PM+1 | Daily |

**INCHEON (ICN)-SAIPAN**

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| 7C3462 | 08:00AM | 1:30PM | Daily Feb 7-16 only |
| 7C3406 | 10:10AM | 3:30PM | Daily |
| TW307 | 7:45PM | 1:15AM+1 | Daily |
| OZ625 | 8:20PM | 1:40AM+1 | 3, 6 |
| 7C3404 | 10:15PM | 3:35AM+1 | Daily |

LEGEND: Days: Monday (1), Tuesday (2), Wednesday (3), Thursday (4), Friday (5), Saturday (6) and Sunday (7); UA United Airlines; PR, Philippine Airlines; TW, T'Way Air; OZ, Asiana Airlines; 7C, Jeju Air; BX, Air Busan • ETD: Estimated Time of Departure; ETA: Estimated Time of Arrival. *(The Saipan Tribune is not responsible for any changes in the schedule.)*

## STAR MARIANAS AIR, INC.

FLIGHT SCHEDULE AS OF JANUARY 2, 2024

**SAIPAN TO ROTA**

| FLIGHT # | FROM | TO | DEPARTS | ARRIVES | FREQUENCY |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1301 | SAIPAN | ROTA | 08:30 | 09:00 | Daily |
| 1302 | SAIPAN | ROTA | 10:30 | 11:00 | Daily |
| 1303 | SAIPAN | ROTA | 15:30 | 16:00 | Daily |

**ROTA TO SAIPAN**

| FLIGHT # | FROM | TO | DEPARTS | ARRIVES | FREQUENCY |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 3101 | ROTA | SAIPAN | 9:30 | 10:00 | Daily |
| 3102 | ROTA | SAIPAN | 11:30 | 12:00 | Saturday & Sunday |
| 3103 | ROTA | SAIPAN | 13:30 | 14:00 | Monday To Friday |
| 3104 | ROTA | SAIPAN | 16:30 | 17:00 | Daily |

**ROTA TO GUAM**

| FLIGHT # | FROM | TO | DEPARTS | ARRIVES | FREQUENCY |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 3401 | ROTA | GUAM | 11:30 | 12:00 | Monday To Friday |

**GUAM TO ROTA**

| FLIGHT # | FROM | TO | DEPARTS | ARRIVES | FREQUENCY |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 4301 | GUAM | ROTA | 12:30 | 13:00 | Monday To Friday |

**SAIPAN TO TINIAN**

| FLIGHT # | FROM | TO | DEPARTS | ARRIVES | FREQUENCY |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1201 | SAIPAN | TINIAN | 7:30 | 7:45 | Daily |
| 1202 | SAIPAN | TINIAN | 8:00 | 8:15 | Daily |
| 1203 | SAIPAN | TINIAN | 9:00 | 9:15 | Daily |
| 1204 | SAIPAN | TINIAN | 10:00 | 10:15 | Daily |
| 1206 | SAIPAN | TINIAN | 14:00 | 14:15 | Daily |
| 1207 | SAIPAN | TINIAN | 15:00 | 15:15 | Daily |
| 1208 | SAIPAN | TINIAN | 16:00 | 16:15 | Daily |
| 1209 | SAIPAN | TINIAN | 17:00 | 17:15 | Daily |

**TINIAN TO SAIPAN**

| FLIGHT # | FROM | TO | DEPARTS | ARRIVES | FREQUENCY |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 2101 | TINIAN | SAIPAN | 8:00 | 8:15 | Daily |
| 2102 | TINIAN | SAIPAN | 8:30 | 8:45 | Daily |
| 2103 | TINIAN | SAIPAN | 9:30 | 9:45 | Daily |
| 2104 | TINIAN | SAIPAN | 10:30 | 10:45 | Daily |
| 2106 | TINIAN | SAIPAN | 14:30 | 14:45 | Daily |
| 2107 | TINIAN | SAIPAN | 15:30 | 15:45 | Daily |
| 2108 | TINIAN | SAIPAN | 16:30 | 16:45 | Daily |
| 2109 | TINIAN | SAIPAN | 17:30 | 17:45 | Daily |

# Business

## Elevate your evening at Mari Bar for Beauty & Beau Nights

It's time to gather your tribe for a night of laid-back luxury at Mari Bar for our weekly Beauty & Beau night. Located in Crowne Plaza Resort Saipan, Mari Bar welcomes you every Wednesday to kick back, relax, and enjoy some of the finer things in life without breaking the bank.

You'll expect bottomless bubbles to enjoy every sip of sparkling wine, a tasty charcuterie platter perfect for sharing, and quality time with your nearest and dearest for just $40 per person. With the backdrop of Saipan's stunning sunset and our laid-back atmosphere, Mari Bar sets the stage for a relaxed evening where you can forget your worries and simply enjoy the moment.

Beauty & Beau Night is the perfect excuse to gather your friends, celebrate a special occasion, or simply treat yourself to a little indulgence. It's an evening that's all about good company, great drinks, and unforgettable memories.

Keep the good times flowing and book a table at Mari Bar this Wednesday. For reservations and inquiries, please email restaurants.cprsaipan@ihg.com or call at (670) 234-6412.

Crowne Plaza Resort Saipan is a 422-room hotel located in Garapan. Guests will be greeted by the resort's lush tropical gardens and panoramic view of Micro Beach, with Crowne Plaza's warm and friendly hospitality ensuring a seamless arrival. ***(PR)***

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Expect bottomless bubbles to enjoy every sip of sparkling wine, a tasty charcuterie platter perfect for sharing, and quality time with your nearest and dearest for just $40 per person at Crowne Plaza Resort Saipan's Mari Bar.

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Beauty & Beau Night is the perfect excuse to gather your friends, celebrate a special occasion, or simply treat yourself to a little indulgence.

## Trump hawks $399 branded shoes at 'Sneaker Con,' a day after a $355M ruling against him

**PHILADELPHIA** (AP)—As he closes in on the Republican presidential nomination, former President Donald Trump made a highly unusual stop Saturday, hawking new Trump-branded sneakers at "Sneaker Con," a gathering that bills itself as the "The Greatest Sneaker Show on Earth."

Trump was met with loud boos as well as cheers at the Philadelphia Convention Center as he introduced what he called the first official Trump footwear.

The shoes, shiny gold high tops with an American flag detail on the back, are being sold as "Never Surrender High-Tops" for $399 on a new website that also sells other Trump-branded shoes and "Victory47" cologne and perfume for $99 a bottle. He'd be the 47th president if elected again.

The website says it has no connection to Trump's campaign, though Trump campaign officials promoted the appearance in online posts.

The unannounced launch came a day after a judge in New York ordered Trump and his company to pay a whopping $355 million in penalties, finding that the former president lied about his wealth for years, scheming to dupe banks, insurers and others by inflating his wealth on financial statements.

That penalty came after Trump was ordered to pay an additional $83.3 million to the writer E. Jean Carroll for damaging her reputation after she accused him of sexual assault. With interest payments, Trump's legal debts might now exceed a half-billion dollars—an amount it is unclear he can afford to pay.

Trump's appearance was met with clashing boos from his detractors and chants of "USA!" from supporters who arrived at the sneaker event decked out in Trump gear. The dueling chants made it difficult, at times, to hear Trump speak.

Some had been given signs that read "SNEAKERHEADS LOVE TRUMP."

"There's a lot of emotion in this room," Trump said of the reaction, after holding up and showing off a pair of gold shoes, then placing one on each side of his podium.

"This is something that I've been talking about for 12 years, 13 years. And I think it's going to be a big success," he said.

As he spoke, the smell of weed occasionally wafted through the room.

Some of those who attended said they were unaware Trump would be there, and continued to shop as a crowd gathered around the stage. Many in the audience said they were not from the city and instead hailed from nearby states and Washington, D.C.

The attendees skewed younger and more diverse than Trump's usual rally crowds. Trump's campaign is hoping he will be able to win over more young and minority voters, particularly young Black men, in a likely rematch against President Joe Biden in November.

This isn't the first money-making venture Trump has announced since launching his third campaign for the White House in 2022. Trump last year reported making between $100,000 and $1 million from a series of digital trading cards that portrayed him, through photo editing, in a series of cartoon-like images, including as an astronaut, a cowboy and a superhero. He has also released books featuring photos of his time in office and letters written to him through the years.

Before he ran for office, Trump hawked everything from steaks to vodka to a venture he called "Trump University."

The new sneaker website says it is run by CIC Ventures LLC, a company that Trump reported owning in his 2023 financial disclosure. The website states the new venture "is not political and has nothing to do with any political campaign."

Still, it describes the sneakers as a limited-edition, numbered "true collector's item" that is "Bold, gold, and tough, just like President Trump."

"The Never Surrender sneakers are your rally cry in shoe form," the description reads. "Lace-up and step out ready to conquer."

A Trump spokesman did not respond to questions about the event, including whether Trump was paid to attend.

Among those in the crowd were Jonathen Santiago, 21, and Danea Mitchell, 20, Trump supporters who drove from Monroe County in the northeastern part of the state for the sneaker event. They said they were excited to see the former president and praised how he interacted with the crowd. They also had kind words for the sneakers.

"The red bottoms were a really nice touch," Mitchell said.

She shrugged when asked about Trump's legal troubles. "I think it'll be an interesting four years if he's found guilty, but I have no doubt he'll be president," she said.

Also in attendance was a group of "cheer moms" from New Jersey who said they were in town for a cheerleading event and decided to stop by for a chance to see Trump.

Karla Burke, 48, said she heard some people booing and making noise, but that most people around her had been supporters. "At the front was a different vibe," she said.

As for Friday's penalty in Trump's civil fraud trial, Burke said it doesn't change her support. "I think it was unfair," she said. "They're just going after him so he's not the Republican candidate."

## California is forging ahead with food waste recycling

**CHULA VISTA, Calif.** (AP)—Two years after California launched an effort to keep organic waste out of landfills, the state is so far behind on getting food recycling programs up and running that it's widely accepted next year's ambitious waste-reduction targets won't be met.

Over time, food scraps and other organic materials like yard waste emit methane, a gas more potent and damaging in the short-term than carbon emissions from fossil fuels. California's goal is to keep that waste from piling up in landfills, instead turning it into compost or biogas.

Everything from banana peels and used coffee grounds to yard waste and soiled paper products like pizza boxes counts as organic waste. Households and businesses are now supposed to sort that material into a different bin.

But it has been hard to change people's behavior in such a short period of time and cities were delayed setting up contracts to haul organic waste due to the pandemic. In Southern California, the nation's largest facility to convert food waste into biogas has filed for bankruptcy because it's not getting enough of the organic material.

"We're way behind on implementation," said Coby Skye, the recently retired deputy director for environmental services at Los Angeles County Public Works. "In America, for better or worse, we want convenience, and it's very difficult to spend a lot of time and effort educating people about separation."

Meanwhile, some communities that ramped up collection now have more compost than they know what to do with, a sign that more challenges are yet to come as the nation's most populous state plows ahead with its recycling plans.

Only a handful of states mandate organics recycling, and none are running a program as large as California's, which seeks to slash by 75% the amount of organic waste it sends to landfills by 2025 from 2014 levels.

Reaching that goal within a year would be a stretch, experts said.

About three-quarters of communities are currently collecting organic waste from homes, said Rachel Machi Wagoner, CalRecycle's director. While some places are lagging, her aim isn't to punish them but to help them get started, adding that every bit helps the state move towards its goal of reducing emissions.

"My goal is about figuring out where the challenges are and getting us as quickly as possible to success," she said.

"I don't know when we will reach our 75% goal, but we will reach it," she added.

CalRecycle hasn't tallied data yet on how much organic waste was diverted from landfills in 2023. Jurisdictions reported diverting 11.2 million tons (10.1 million metric tons) of organics at the end of 2022, up from 9.9 million tons (8.9 million metric tons) the prior year, Wagoner said.

# Nation

# Christian-nation idea fuels US conservative causes

By PETER SMITH
ASSOCIATED PRESS

AP

President Joe Biden, with from left, House Minority Leader Hakeem Jeffries, D-N.Y., and House Speaker Mike Johnson of La., pray and listen during the National Prayer Breakfast, Thursday, Feb. 1, 2024, at the Capitol in Washington.

## » But historians say it misreads founders' intent

The U.S. Constitution doesn't mention Christianity or any specific religion. The Declaration of Independence famously proclaims that people's rights come from a "Creator" and "Nature's God"—but doesn't specify who that is.

Yet large numbers of Americans believe the founders intended the U.S. to be a Christian nation, and many believe it should be one.

Such views are especially strong among Republicans and their white evangelical base. Already such views are being voiced by supporters of Donald Trump amid his bid to recapture the presidency.

The idea of a Christian America means different things to different people. Pollsters have found a wide circle of Americans who hold general God-and-country sentiments.

But within that is a smaller, hardcore group who also check other boxes in surveys—such as that the U.S. Constitution was inspired by God and that the federal government should declare the U.S. a Christian nation, advocate Christian values or stop enforcing the separation of church and state.

For those embracing that package of beliefs, it's more likely they'll have unfavorable views toward immigrants, dismiss or downplay the impact of anti-Black discrimination and believe Trump was a good or great president, according to a 2021 Pew Research Center survey.

This latter group reflects a movement widely called Christian nationalism, which fuses American and Christian values, symbols and identity and seeks to privilege Christianity in public life.

The idea of Christian nationhood fills Americans' need for an origin story, a belief that "we've come here for something special, and that we're here for God's work," said Eric McDaniel, an associate professor of government at the University of Texas.

It creates a sense of "national innocence," so adherents resist confronting uglier parts of U.S. history, he said.

The belief connects to other beliefs past and present, from the Manifest Destiny doctrine that justified continental conquest to Trump's America First and Make America Great Again slogans, said McDaniel, a co-author of "The Everyday Crusade: Christian Nationalism in American Politics."

Trump has echoed some of these ideas, vowing to bar immigrants who "don't like our religion."

Many conservatives and Republicans embrace the idea of Christian national origins, even as many reject the "Christian nationalist" label.

Republican House Speaker Mike Johnson has proclaimed that America is and was founded as a Christian nation and that Thomas Jefferson was "divinely inspired" in his writing of the Declaration of Independence, according to a 2015 sermon that drew wider attention with his recent election as speaker.

WallBuilders, an organization Johnson credits for its "profound influence" on him, has spread materials claiming that "revisionist" historians have downplayed America's Christian origins, but the group has been widely criticized for historically dubious claims.

A lawsuit on its behalf is challenging the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority's refusal to run its bus ads touting the purported beliefs of founders.

Vocal supporters of Trump have described current politics as spiritual warfare for the destiny of a country that former Trump aide Steve Bannon described as the "New Jerusalem" and conservative activist Charlie Kirk said was founded by "courageous Bible believing Christians."

Recent Texas, Oklahoma and Kentucky Republican Party platforms proclaim the country was founded on "Judeo-Christian" principles.

The Rev. Robert Jeffress, pastor of First Baptist Church of Dallas, said he doesn't identify as a Christian nationalist, but does believe America was founded as a Christian nation.

"I'm not claiming that all of our founders were Christians," he said in an interview. "Some were deists, some were atheists, but the majority were Christians. I'm also not saying that non-Christians shouldn't have the same rights as Christians in our country."

# State governments looking to protect health-related data as it's used in abortion battle

Some state governments and federal regulators were already moving to keep individuals' reproductive health information private when a U.S. senator's report last week offered a new jolt, describing how cellphone location data was used to send millions of anti-abortion ads to people who visited Planned Parenthood offices.

Federal law bars medical providers from sharing health data without a patient's consent but doesn't prevent digital tech companies from tracking menstrual cycles or an individual's location and selling it to data brokers. Legislation for federal bans have never gained momentum, largely because of opposition from the tech industry.

Whether that should change has become another political fault line in a nation where most Republican-controlled states have restricted abortion—including 14 with bans in place at every stage of pregnancy—and most Democratic ones have sought to protect access since the U.S. Supreme Court in 2022 overturned Roe v. Wade.

Abortion rights advocates fear that that if such data is not kept private, it could be used not only in targeted ads but also in law enforcement investigations or by abortion opponents looking to harm those who seek to end pregnancies.

"It isn't just sort of creepy," said Washington state Rep. Vandana Slatter, the sponsor of a law her state adopted last year to rein in unauthorized use of health information. "It's actually harmful."

But so far, there's no evidence of widespread use of this kind of data in law enforcement investigations.

"We're generally talking about a future risk, not something that's happening on the ground yet," said Albert Fox Cahn, executive director of the Surveillance Technology Oversight Project and an advocate of protections.

The report last week from Sen. Ron Wyden, an Oregon Democrat, showed the biggest known anti-abortion ad campaign directed to people who had been identified as having visited abortion providers.

Wyden's investigation found that the information gathered by a now-defunct data broker called Near Intelligence was used by ads from The Veritas Society, a nonprofit founded by Wisconsin Right to Life. The ads targeted people who visited 600 locations in 48 states from 2019 through 2022. There were more than 14 million ads in Wisconsin alone.

Wyden called on the Federal Trade Commission to intervene in the bankruptcy case for Near to make sure the location information collected on Americans is destroyed and not sold to another data broker. He's also asking the Securities Exchange Commission to investigate whether the company committed securities fraud by making misleading statements to investors about the senator's investigation.

It's not the first time the issue has come up.

Massachusetts reached a settlement in 2017 with an ad agency that ran a similar campaign nearly a decade ago. ***(AP)***

# Houston megachurch holds healing and thanksgiving service

**HOUSTON** (AP)—Celebrity pastor Joel Osteen's Houston megachurch held a special service Sunday dedicated to healing and thanksgiving a week after a woman opened fire in one of its hallways before being gunned down by security officers.

Osteen's Lakewood Church has not had services since the Feb. 11 shooting that sent worshippers scrambling for safety. On Sunday, Osteen, his wife Victoria Osteen and members of the church staff who lead Lakewood's Spanish ministry sat in chairs on the stage and spoke about the shooting, how it has impacted Lakewood's community and how the church was moving forward.

Osteen told parishioners it has been a difficult time with "a lot of trauma."

"You just got to know Lakewood is strong and it keeps getting stronger," he said. "Fear is not going to win. Faith is going to win. We are going to move forward."

Church leaders thanked the security staff and others who responded during the shooting and protected parishioners. Osteen invited Houston Mayor John Whitmire and police Chief Troy Finner to the stage and thanked them for their help after the tragedy. Attendees gave officers and security staff a standing ovation.

"After the tragedy of last week, (God) had a purpose in bringing us together to show how united our city is," Whitmire said during a fiery and emotional speech.

As Osteen and others spoke, people in the audience could be heard saying, "Amen" and "Thank you, God."

"What today is about is reclaiming what is ours, reclaiming the space that God has provided for all of us" Victoria Osteen said.

Officers from various law enforcement agencies, including Houston Police, walked the hallways during and between services Sunday.

Church spokesperson Don Iloff said 40 to 50 uniformed and plainclothes officers typically work every church service. He said he did not immediately know if that number was higher Sunday.

Police say Genesse Moreno, 36, entered the church between Sunday services with her 7-year-old son and began firing an AR-style rifle. Moreno did not reach the main sanctuary and was killed after exchanging gunfire with two off-duty officers. Two people were wounded in the shooting, including Moreno's son, who was shot in the head and remained hospitalized.

Osteen, who wiped away tears as he spoke, said he was praying for the boy.

Moreno "came to do a lot of harm, but by the grace of God, we are all here," Osteen said. "Lord, I know she was troubled in her mind."

# World

# Israel vows to 'finish the job' in Gaza

## » As War Cabinet member threatens a Ramadan deadline for Rafah

**RAFAH, Gaza Strip** (AP)—Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu on Sunday brushed off growing calls to halt the military offensive in Gaza, vowing to "finish the job" as a member of his War Cabinet threatened to invade the southern city of Rafah if remaining Israeli hostages are not freed by the upcoming Muslim holy month of Ramadan.

Israel's government has not publicly discussed a timeline for a ground offensive on Rafah, where more than half the enclave's 2.3 million Palestinians have sought refuge. Retired general Benny Gantz, part of Netanyahu's three-member War Cabinet, represents an influential voice but not the final word on what might lie ahead.

"If by Ramadan our hostages are not home, the fighting will continue to the Rafah area," Gantz told a conference of Jewish American leaders. Ramadan, expected to begin March 10, is historically a tense time in the region.

As cease-fire negotiations struggle after signs of progress in recent weeks, Netanyahu has called demands by Gaza's ruling Hamas militant group "delusional."

The United States, Israel's top ally, says it still hopes to broker a cease-fire and hostage-release agreement, and envisions a wider resolution of the war sparked by Hamas' deadly Oct. 7 attack in southern Israel.

The U.S. also says it will veto another draft U.N. resolution calling for a cease-fire, with its U.N. ambassador warning against measures that could jeopardize "the opportunity for an enduring resolution of hostilities."

But Netanyahu opposes Palestinian statehood, which the U.S. calls a key element in a broader vision for normalization of relations between Israel and regional heavyweight Saudi Arabia. His Cabinet adopted a declaration Sunday saying Israel "categorically rejects international edicts on a permanent arrangement with the Palestinians" and opposes any unilateral recognition of a Palestinian state.

The international community overwhelmingly supports an independent Palestinian state as part of a future peace agreement. Netanyahu's government is filled with hard-liners who oppose Palestinian independence.

Netanyahu wants Israel to achieve "total victory" over Hamas. In response to international concern over a Rafah offensive, he has said Palestinian civilians will be evacuated. Where they will go in largely devastated Gaza is not clear.

The suggested timing for the offensive came as the World Health Organization chief said southern Gaza's main medical center, Nasser Hospital, "is not functional anymore" after Israeli forces raided it in Khan Younis last week.

Israeli strikes across Gaza continued, killing at least 18 people overnight into Sunday, according to medics and witnesses. A strike in Rafah killed six people, including a woman and three children, and another killed five in Khan Younis, the main target of the southern Gaza offensive in recent weeks. Associated Press journalists saw the bodies.

"All those who were martyred were those whom the Jews asked to move to safe places," said a bystander after the Rafah strike, Ahmad Abu Rezeq.

In Gaza City, which suffered widespread destruction early in the war, an airstrike flattened a home, killing seven people, including three women, according to relative Sayed al-Afifi.

## ASIAN BRIEFS

### China's coast guard to ramp up patrols near Taiwan's Kinmen archipelago after 2 fishermen drown

**BANGKOK** (AP)—China is stepping up patrols in the waters off the coast of Taiwan's Kinmen archipelago, days after two of its fishermen drowned while being chased by the Taiwanese coast guard, which accused the boat of trespassing. The Chinese coast guard's Fujian division will regularly monitor the waters off the southern coast of the city of Xiamen—a few kilometers from Kinmen—to strengthen maritime law enforcement, said the coast guard's spokesman, Gan Yu, in a statement Sunday. Fishermen from Taiwan and China regularly sail that stretch of water which has seen a rise in tensions as the number of Chinese vessels—including sand dredgers and fishing boats—have notably increased in the area. Kinmen residents have complained of both the noise and sound pollution from the vessels, as well as losses to their livelihood in fishing. The fishermen's deaths are unusual despite the level of Chinese activity in the waters near Kinmen, which is closer to China than it is to Taiwan's main island. China claims all of self-ruled Taiwan as part of its territory.

### Japan hosts Ukraine reconstruction conference to showcase its support for the war-torn country

**TOKYO** (AP)—Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida on Monday pledged his country's long-term engagement in Ukraine's reconstruction, calling it a future investment, as Japan stressed its commitment to supporting the war-torn country ahead of the two-year anniversary of Russia's invasion.= In his keynote speech at a conference Japan co-organized with the Ukrainian government and business organizations, Kishida said Japanese public and private cooperation will be a long-term partnership based on inclusivity, humanitarianism as well as technology and knowledge. Kishida stressed the importance of investment across industries for the future of that country's development and ensuring that the support caters to Ukraine's needs. More than 50 cooperation deals were signed by Japanese and Ukrainian government agencies and companies, and Kishida announced an opening of a new government trade office in Kyiv. Support for Ukraine's reconstruction is about "investing in the future," Kishida said.

### Thai ex-Prime Minister Thaksin is free on parole, but can he restore his old political luster?

**BANGKOK** (AP)—Thailand's former Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra, the Southeast Asian nation's most controversial politician for more than two decades, was released on parole early Sunday from a Bangkok hospital where he spent six months serving time for corruption-related offenses. The telecoms billionaire was toppled in a 2006 coup but voluntarily returned from self-exile to Thailand in August last year and reported to prison to begin serving an eight-year sentence. Critics charged that the 74-year-old Thaksin's early release reeked of a deal that short-circuited justice for political reasons. Current Prime Minister Srettha Thavisin, a leading member of the ruling Thaksin-backed Pheu Thai party, expressed congratulations to his predecessor. Thaksin was seen wearing a neck brace, a sling on his right arm and a surgical mask inside one of the cars in a convoy that left the Police General Hospital just before sunrise.

# Over 300 detained in Russia as country mourns death of Alexei Navalny, Putin's fiercest enemy

Over 300 people were detained in Russia while paying tribute to opposition leader Alexei Navalny, who died at a remote Arctic penal colony, a prominent rights group reported Sunday.

The sudden death of Navalny, 47, was a crushing blow to many Russians, who had pinned their hopes for the future on President Vladimir Putin's fiercest foe. Navalny remained vocal in his unrelenting criticism of the Kremlin even after surviving a nerve agent poisoning and receiving multiple prison terms.

The news reverberated across the globe, with many world leaders blaming the death on Putin and his government. In an exchange with reporters shortly after leaving a Saturday church service, President Joe Biden reiterated his stance that Putin was ultimately to blame for Navalny's death. "The fact of the matter is, Putin is responsible. Whether he ordered it, he's responsible for the circumstance," Biden said. "It's a reflection of who he is. It cannot be tolerated."

Other politicians took a more cautious stance. Brazilian President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva said Sunday that he wouldn't "jump to conclusions" over Navalny's death. "If the death is under suspicion, we must first carry out an investigation to find out what the citizen (Navalny) died of," Lula said in a press conference after returning from an African Union summit in Ethiopia on Sunday. ***(AP)***

Commemorate the
essence of a life well-lived and
honor the legacy of your loved ones
with an Obituary in the Saipan Tribune.
Our affordable rates include our expert
design services and a permanent online
space on the saipantribune.com.
For inquiries, please contact our advertising
specialists at (670) 235-8747 or
sales@saipantribune.com
Hafa Adai!
Saipan Tribune
THE CNMI'S FIRST DAILY NEWSPAPER

# Overdrive

## 2024 Lexus GX 550: No longer an off-road poser

By LARRY PRINTZ
Tribune News Service

It's been 14 years since the Lexus GX benefited from a total makeover, and a lot has changed since 2010. In that time, the Lexus GX has spent much of its time in the urban jungle, with the only green most GXs ever see being at the local country club.

That may change with the redesigned 2024 Lexus GX 550, a body-on-frame SUV that finally resembles what it's capable of achieving. Severely square-jawed and unremittingly horizontal, its deign banishes its mall-crawling snobbery for some serious trail boss boldness. And its capability is more than skin deep. It rides on the same Toyota corporate GA-F platform that underpins the Lexus LX 600, as well as the Toyota Tundra, Sequoia, Tacoma and soon-to-arrive Land Cruiser.

But for 2024, its appearance looks as ready for the rough stuff as Patagonia outerwear or a pair of Merrill hiking boots. And while you can still get it with three rows, its main mission is not that of a family bus. That role is now filled by the all-new, three-row 2024 Lexus TX.

That has freed the Lexus GX to explore its Mountain Man genetics. Although offered in Premium, Premium+, Luxury and Luxury+ trim, the Overtrail and Overtrail+ grades look the part, wearing 18-inch wheels with 33-inch all-terrain tires, with roof rails and all the mechanical bits to back it up. While all models get a Torsen limited-slip locking center differential, Overtrail models have an electronically controlled, locking rear differential and an electronic kinetic dynamic suspension system (E-KDSS) that locks and unlocks the front and rear stabilizer bars to enhance off-road wheel articulation. Drive modes, crawl control and tow/haul mode switches are handily located on the center console.

LEXUS

The 2024 Lexus GX.

Regardless of grade, the 2024 Lexus GX is 5 inches longer than the 2023 GX, as well as being 3.8 inches wider, 1.4 inches taller and offering 0.6 inch more ground clearance. It also loses the barn-door rear door for a traditional roof-hinged tailgate with a window can be opened separately, so rear cargo can be accessed without opening the tailgate. And there's a standard tow hitch, able to tow up to 9,000 pounds.

LEXUS

That said, Premium and Luxury models have a mere 10.3 cubic-feet of cargo space with all three rows in use, and most of it is vertical. In contrast, Overtrail trims are fitted with two rows, providing 45.6 cubic feet of cargo space with both rows in use. This allows you to haul a lot of gear to your campsite without being exposed to the elements.

A 12.3-inch digital instrument cluster, 10-inch head-up display, a 14-inch infotainment touchscreen, wireless Apple CarPlay and Android Auto, and up to six USB-C ports come standard. And a 21-speaker Mark Levinson surround sound system is available if the standard 10-speaker system doesn't live up to your expectations.

The first two rows have the space and comfort you might expect, providing a generous amount of head and leg room. But the third row is best left to children and adults you secretly despise. If there's anything that's disappointing about the Lexus GX, it's that the interior lacks the luxurious ambiance you might expect. It feels more like a premium Toyota than a truly luxurious Lexus.

Initially, all models will be powered by a twin-turbocharged, intercooled double-overhead-cam V-6. It's mated to a 10-speed automatic transmission. All-wheel drive is standard. Rated at 349 horsepower and 479 pound-feet of torque, more than the old model's 4.6-liter V-8. It runs 0-60 mph in 6.5 seconds on its way to a 109-mph top speed and returns the sort of fuel economy you might expect from a body-on-frame SUV: 15 mpg city, 21 mpg highway and 17 mpg in combined driving. Premium fuel is required. If this sounds a bit too thirsty, you might want to wait for the forthcoming hybrid driveline, although Lexus has not revealed any details about it.

**NUTS & BOLTS**

- **Base price**: $67,900
- **Engine**: 3.4-liter twin-turbocharged V6
- **Horsepower/Torque**: 349/479 pound-feet
- **EPA rating (combined city/highway)**: 17 mpg
- **Fuel required**: Premium
- **Length/Width/Height**: 197/78.7/76.2 inches
- **Ground clearance**: 8.86 inches
- **Payload**: 1,499 pounds
- **Cargo capacity**: 10.3-90.5 cubic feet
- **Towing capacity**: 9,000 pounds

The 2024 Lexus GX 550 holds few unexpected revelations when it comes to on-road behavior. It provides the quiet, comfortable ride you'd expect from a Lexus SUV; it's a nice driver. And being a body-on-frame SUV, it truly possesses off-road ability. So, yes, there's body lean in corners, but perhaps not as much as you might expect. That being said, any sportiness you might expect comes once you venture past civilization. That's when this vehicle truly shines. It can ford 27.5 inches of water. Disconnect the sway bars, and you have an extra 2.45 inches of wheel articulation, which should meet the needs of all but the most demanding off-road enthusiast. Certainly, it should meet the expectations of the weather-phobic. And while it has six drive modes—including Auto, Dirt, Sand, Mud, Deep Snow and Rock—most drivers will never switch from Auto. It is a Lexus, after all.

Even if you never venture off-road, you'll find the 2024 Lexus GX 550 to be the perfect off-road lifestyle accessory. It's the lifestyle gear. You may not need it, but you know that you want it—and with good reason.

## How long will my car battery last?

**Q: I have a 2008 Honda Civic that I have driven once a week for the last five years. Will the life of the battery be extended due to the limited use or is the determining factor the actual age of the battery with all other conditions being equal? Is there a more relevant factor?**

**B.H., Center Valley, Pennsylvania**

**A:** A car battery typically lasts 3 to 5 years. Lack of use won't save the battery, just like it won't save batteries in a flashlight you haven't used. Extreme cold in the winter or heat in the summer take a toll. If the battery terminals are corroded, the charging system may not be able to provide the voltage the battery needs. Finally, leaving your lights on can kill the battery. Repeated deep cycling shortens battery life.

■■■

**Q: My 2004 Nissan 350Z roadster convertible top stops and starts many times when trying to put the top down. The dealer proposed a fix that costs several thousand dollars. Is this a common problem? Is there a fix that I can do myself?**

**G.M., Lafayette, California**

**A:** Take your car to a shop that specializes in convertibles. They have seen it all and can often offer a much less expensive fix. It may be as simple as a poor electrical connection, weak lift cylinders, low fluid or a bad pump. It seems like the dealer wants to replace everything. I doubt there is much you can fix yourself.

■■■

**Q: I have a 2021 Chevy Colorado V6 with about 14,000 miles on it. The check engine light comes on intermittently while driving, but never when it's being serviced. The mechanic is unable to verify any problem, and tells me that unless it's blinking, not to worry about it. It unnerves me to see it on. Any suggestions?**

**B.F., Pahrump, Nevada**

**A:** Whenever the check engine light comes on, it is reporting a problem and stores a trouble code in the car's computer. The code remains there for 50 engine restarts. If the problem doesn't return, the code is erased from memory. It's time to find a better auto technician who has the equipment to read the codes and track down the source of the problem—even if the check engine light isn't glowing.

■■■

**Q: Pep Boys wanted to charge me $188 to install the rear lift gate struts that I had already purchased for my old (2008) but very sturdy Volvo XC90. I declined and looked on YouTube and did it myself in about one minute with a 2x4 for a prop. Those gates are heavy. The same Pep Boys charged me $40-something to replace a driver's side headlamp and $60-something to replace a passenger's side headlamp a week later.**

**D.S., La Grange, Illinois**

**A:** That's the difference between home cooking and dining at a restaurant.

■■■

**Q: An easy way to remove the annoying film that builds up on the interior glass is to use good old inexpensive Lemon Pledge applied with a microfiber cloth. It may take a few passes, but it comes off easily. An old Mercedes mechanic told me about Lemon Pledge years ago, and it can also be used on any nonporous surface in your car interior. It leaves no dust-catching film behind and leaves a nice lemon scent. I don't work for S.C. Johnson, I'm just a retired guy who has used the stuff to detail my vehicles for decades.**

**B.C., Las Vegas**

**A:** I pledge to give it a try. Clearly, we must move on from this topic. It's becoming a pain.

**MOTORMOUTH**

BY BOB WEBER
Tribune News Service

*Bob Weber is a writer and mechanic who became an ASE-certified Master Automobile Technician in 1976. Weber's work has appeared in professional trade magazines and various consumer publications including* Consumer Guide *and* Consumers Digest. *Send questions along with name and town to motormouth.tribune@gmail.com.*

# Life & Style

## ‘Oppenheimer’ wins 7 prizes, including best picture, at the BAFTA

**LONDON** (AP)—Atom bomb epic “Oppenheimer” won seven prizes, including best picture, director and actor, at the 77th British Academy Film Awards on Sunday, cementing its front-runner status for the Oscars next month.

Gothic fantasia “Poor Things” took five prizes and Holocaust drama “The Zone of Interest” won three.

British-born filmmaker Christopher Nolan won his first best director BAFTA for “Oppenheimer,” and Irish performer Cillian Murphy won the best actor prize for playing physicist J. Robert Oppenheimer, the father of the atomic bomb.

Murphy said he was grateful to play such a “colossally knotty, complex character.”

Nolan noted that nuclear weapons are “a nihilistic subject and the film inevitably reflects that,” telling the movie’s backers: “Thank you for taking on something dark.”

Emma Stone was named best actress for playing the wild and spirited Bella Baxter in “Poor Things,” a steampunk-style visual extravaganza that won prizes for visual effects, production design, makeup and hair and costume design.

“Oppenheimer” had a field-leading 13 nominations, but missed out on the record of nine trophies, set in 1971 by “Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid.”

AP

Producer Emma Thomas, left, and director Christopher Nolan, winner of the best film award and director award for ‘Oppenheimer’, pose for photographers at the 77th British Academy Film Awards, BAFTA’s, in London, Sunday, Feb. 18, 2024

It won the best film race against “Poor Things,” “Killers of the Flower Moon,” “Anatomy of a Fall” and “The Holdovers.” “Oppenheimer” also scooped trophies for editing, cinematography and musical score, as well as the best supporting actor prize for Robert Downey Jr., who played Atomic Energy Commission head Lewis Strauss.

Da’Vine Joy Randolph was named best supporting actress for playing a boarding school cook in “The Holdovers” and said she felt a “responsibility I don’t take lightly” to tell the stories of underrepresented people like her character Mary.

“Oppenheimer” faced stiff competition in what’s widely considered a vintage year for cinema and an awards season energized by the end of actors’ and writers’ strikes that shut down Hollywood for months.

“ The Zone of Interest,” a British-produced film shot in Poland with a largely German cast, was named both best British film and best film not in English—a first—and also took the prize for its sound, which has been described as the real star of the film.

Jonathan Glazer’s unsettling drama takes place in a family home just outside the walls of the Auschwitz death camp, whose horrors are heard and hinted at, rather than seen.

“Walls aren’t new from before or since the Holocaust, and it seems stark right now that we should care about innocent people being killed in Gaza or Yemen or Mariupol or Israel,” producer James Wilson said. “Thank you for recognizing a film that asks us to think in those spaces.”

Ukraine war documentary “20 Days in Mariupol,” produced by The Associated Press and PBS “Frontline,” won the prize for best documentary.

“This is not about us,” said filmmaker Mstyslav Chernov, who captured the harrowing reality of life in the besieged city with an AP team. “This is about Ukraine, about the people of Mariupol.”

Chernov said the story of the city and its fall into Russian occupation “is a symbol of struggle and a symbol of faith. Thank you for empowering our voice and let’s just keep fighting.”

The awards ceremony, hosted by “Doctor Who” star David Tennant—who entered wearing a kilt and sequined top while carrying a dog named Bark Ruffalo—was a glitzy, British-accented appetizer for Hollywood’s Academy Awards, closely watched for hints about who might win at the Oscars on March 10.

The prize for original screenplay went to French courtroom drama “Anatomy of a Fall.” The film about a woman on trial over the death of her husband was written by director Justine Triet and her partner, Arthur Harari.

“It’s a fiction, and we are reasonably fine,” Triet joked.

Cord Jefferson won the adapted screenplay prize for the satirical “American Fiction,” about the struggles of an African American novelist

Jefferson said he hoped the success of the movie “maybe changes the minds of the people who are in charge of greenlighting films and TV shows, allows them to be less risk-averse.”

## 'Bob Marley: One Love' stirs up $27.7M weekend, 'Madame Web' flops

**NEW YORK** (AP)—Paramount Pictures' Bob Marley biopic "Bob Marley: One Love" outperformed expectations to debut at No. 1 at the box office with a $27.7 million opening weekend, while Sony's "Madame Web" flopped with one of the lowest debuts for a movie centered on a Marvel character.

Both films launched in theaters on Tuesday to rope in Valentine's Day moviegoers. But on a weekend that was once expected to go to "Madame Web," "One Love" emerged as the much-preferred option in theaters, despite largely poor reviews.

Instead, "One Love," starring Kingsley Ben-Adir and produced with the involvement of the Marley estate, performed roughly on par with previous hit musical biopics like "Rocketman" and "Elvis." Paramount is forecasting that "One Love" will gross $51 million over its first six days, including estimates for President's Day on Monday. It added $29 million from 47 international territories.

## Disease prognosis doesn’t dampen enjoyment of life

**DEAR ABBY:** I was recently diagnosed with a progressive disease for which there is no cure. It will affect me physically and mentally as I age. For now, I’m treating the symptoms and trying to minimize their effect on my day-to-day life. But this is certainly not how I expected to live out my “golden years.”

I have shared my diagnosis with close family and friends, but until my symptoms become more pronounced, I’m choosing to move forward in as positive a way as possible, without dwelling on the inevitable health issues that lie ahead.

My problem is, some of these friends and family members continually quiz me on the status of my condition. I don’t believe I’m in denial, but I choose not to speak or think about my illness every minute of the good days I still have. This disease will take over much of my future soon enough. When voicing these thoughts in response to their queries, I have been met by some with surprise and it’s perceived as insulting by others who are showing concern for me.

How do I convey my desire for privacy regarding my health without offending well-wishers? This problem is sure to become more frequent as the disease progression becomes evident to more people.

GOOD FOR NOW IN MICHIGAN

**DEAR GOOD: Too many people are “endlessly curious.” If you prefer to take each good day as it comes and not dwell on or be quizzed about your illness, that should be your privilege. You have a right to some privacy.**

**Ask these well-meaning individuals to please not discuss your illness further because, when you are ready to discuss it, YOU will raise the subject. If that message offends anyone, so be it.**

■ ■ ■

**DEAR ABBY:** My boyfriend just started his first year of college. We have been together for about a year and a half. He isn’t super far away, but his mom is restricting us from seeing each other “too often.” Every time I go to visit him, I pay for my own train ticket. I don’t really think my visiting him is affecting her in any way. We both want to be respectful of her and her wishes, but when it’s possible to see him, I’d like to be able to.

A relationship is hard to maintain seeing each other only once a month. He does come home for breaks and some weekends, which I am grateful for. I just don’t feel she should be making those choices for us. I want to communicate to her about this, but I don’t want to seem disrespectful or rude. What should I do?

THREE IS A CROWD

**DEAR THREE: Your boyfriend’s mother wants to be sure her son concentrates on his education with as few distractions as possible. She may also be fearful that the two of you are becoming intimate before you are mature enough to manage the consequences. If you are smart, you will refrain from having the discussion you are contemplating. If the visitation schedule is too restrictive, your boyfriend is the person who should talk to his mother about it.**

■ ■ ■

*To receive a collection of Abby’s most memorable – and most frequently requested – poems and essays, send your name and mailing address, plus check or money order for $8 (U.S. funds) to: Dear Abby – Keepers Booklet, P.O. Box 447, Mount Morris, IL 61054-0447. (Shipping and handling are included in the price.)*

### DEAR ABBY

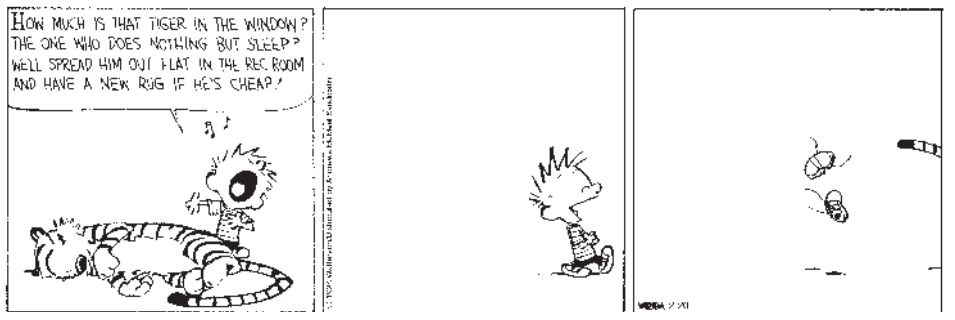
**By Abigail Van Buren**
UNIVERSAL PRESS SYNDICATE

*Dear Abby is written by Abigail Van Buren, also known as Jeanne Phillips, and was founded by her mother, Pauline Phillips. Contact Dear Abby at www.DearAbby.com or P.O. Box 69440, Los Angeles, CA 90069.*

# Pastimes

## Calvin and Hobbes

By Bill Waterson


HOW MUCH IS THAT TIGER IN THE WINDOW? THE ONE WHO DOES NOTHING BUT SLEEP? WE'LL SPREAD HIM OUT FLAT IN THE REC. ROOM AND HAVE A NEW RUG IF HE'S CHEAP!

## Garfield®

By Jim Davis

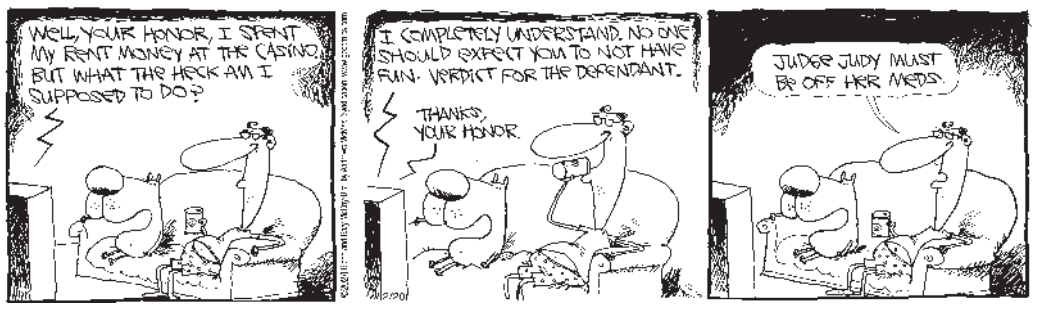
## Adam@home

By Bryan Basset

WHAT IF YOU GET THIS WRITING GIG DONE SUPER FAST BEFORE YOUR BOOK-WRITING MOJO WEARS OFF?
YEAH. YEAH. THAT'S GOOD. LOTS OF COFFEE. TONS OF IT.
PULL AN ALL-NIGHTER AND DO A MONTH OF WORK IN A SINGLE NIGHT.
WHAT COULD GO WRONG?
PREPARE THE DOCS NUCLEAR COFFEE, CHILD!
I'LL NEED THE CODE FOR THE SAFETY LOCKER.

## The Duplex

By Glenn McCoy


WELL, YOUR HONOR, I SPENT MY RENT MONEY AT THE CASINO. BUT WHAT THE HECK AM I SUPPOSED TO DO?
I COMPLETELY UNDERSTAND. NO ONE SHOULD EXPECT YOU TO NOT HAVE FUN. VERDICT FOR THE DEFENDANT.
THANKS, YOUR HONOR.
JUDGE JUDY MUST BE OFF HER MEDS.

## CROSSWORD

*By Eugene Sheffer*

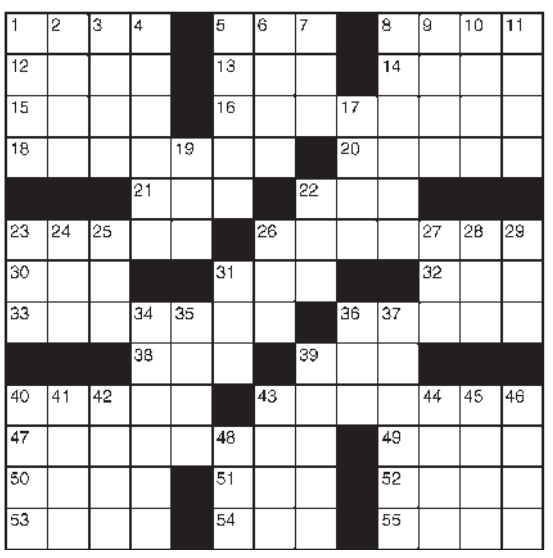
**ACROSS**
1 Asian desert
5 Enjoy the Alps
8 Jet speed measure
12 Bakery fixture
13 Sushi fish
14 Anti-oxidant berry
15 Give temporarily
16 Soaked
18 "Sister Carrie" author
20 Peace goddess
21 Needle-fish
22 "Let's Get Loud" singer's nickname
23 Big copier brand
26 Bridal boutique buys
30 Epoch
31 Dawn goddess
32 Prefix with athlete
33 German city
36 Allayed
38 Annoy
39 Piercing tool
40 Not glossy
43 Visionary
47 Ghastly
49 Harboring a grudge
50 Swerve
51 Chest-beating beast
52 Japanese instrument
53 Pet food brand
54 — Moines
55 Ice and Bronze

**DOWN**
1 First-place medal
2 Done with
3 Nota —
4 Deep blue
5 Passover repast
6 Actress Deborah
7 — -de-France
8 Computer shortcuts
9 Massage target
10 Normandy city
11 Conceal
17 Aswan's river
19 Swing band instrument
22 Third-yr. class
23 Deleted
24 Mess up
25 "Norma —"
26 Mafia boss
27 Map lines (Abbr.)
28 Before
29 Caesar or Vicious
31 Comics cry
34 Indian instruments
35 Historic Scott
36 Farm female
37 The Last Frontier
39 Van Gogh venue
40 1506, in letters
41 Region
42 Abound
43 Hoodwink
44 Synthesizer pioneer
45 Deco artist
46 Antique cars
48 Passing craze

**Solution time: 22 mins.**

| | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| L | I | P | A | | S | H | H | | O | L | N | O |
| C | B | E | R | | W | O | E | | S | L | I | D |
| D | E | A | F | | A | I | R | F | I | E | L | D |
| S | T | R | A | I | T | | B | A | R | G | E | S |
| | | | R | S | T | U | | T | I | A | | |
| O | I | I | F | I | F | I | D | | S | N | A | P |
| A | R | E | | S | A | N | A | A | | C | O | O |
| T | A | O | S | | M | A | Y | F | I | F | I | D |
| | | N | U | T | | R | T | E | S | | | |
| A | I | A | R | M | S | | O | W | I | F | T | S |
| G | A | R | F | I | F | I | D | | A | D | U | F |
| O | I | D | F | | A | A | A | | N | I | N | F |
| G | O | O | D | | T | O | Y | | D | E | E | P |

Yesterday's answer 2-20



**STUMPED?** For answers to today's crossword, call **1-900-226-5955!** 99¢ per minute, touch-tone/rotary phones. (18+ only.) A King Features service, NYC.

**CELEBRITIES BORN ON THIS DAY**: Olivia Rodrigo, 21; Rihanna, 36; Brian Littrell, 49; Cindy Crawford, 58.

**Happy Birthday**: You'll bounce back and forth between logic and motive this year. Keep minimalism in the back of your mind, and you'll come up with an easier way to find the balance that works best for you. You have plenty to gain if you take your time and source your plans. Stay on top of what's expected of you to ensure clear passage forward regarding regulatory issues and infringements that can upset your plans. Your numbers are 8, 15, 22, 29, 33, 37, 42.

**ARIES** *(March 21-April 19)*: Let your imagination lead the way; your inspiration will soar. Call on people who motivate you, and you'll gain insight into something that can help you get things done faster and cheaper. Do the work yourself; relying on others will lead to drama. ✪✪

**TAURUS** *(April 20-May 20)*: Don't take on more than you can handle. Before you begin, consider what you can do and what it will cost. Don't let a last-minute change throw you off guard; make the necessary adjustments and get approval before you begin. ✪✪✪✪

**GEMINI** *(May 21-June 20)*: Put your head down and learn all you can. Refuse to let anyone confuse you or use manipulative means to entice you into taking a different path instead of pursuing your dreams. Being informed and knowing what you want will help you stay on track. ✪✪✪

**CANCER** *(June 21-July 22)*: Make connections, educate others and hone your skills. Consider taking an obscure route that allows you to use your vision to further your objective. Don't buy into hype or make promises that interfere with your plans. ✪✪✪

**LEO** *(July 23-Aug. 22)*: Do your own thing instead of using your attributes to help someone else get ahead. Put your time and energy into what makes you happy, and develop a plan that positions you for advancement. Draw on your experience to attract influential connections. ✪✪✪

**VIRGO** *(Aug. 23-Sept. 22)*: Align yourself with people you feel akin to; you will discover you have options that can put a positive spin on where and how you live. Ask questions, put things in perspective and don't pay for something you don't need. Be astute and disciplined. ✪✪✪✪

**LIBRA** *(Sept. 23-Oct. 22)*: Let your ideas flow into your work and you'll reap the rewards. Don't hesitate when you have so much to gain and everything to lose if you procrastinate. Trust your instincts, live in the moment and pursue your dreams. ✪✪

**SCORPIO** *(Oct. 23-Nov. 21)*: Emotions will be difficult to control. Try to understand all sides of an issue before you share your thoughts or make a move. Let your intuition lead the way. An unusual partnership or reuniting with someone instrumental in your life looks promising. ✪✪✪✪✪

**SAGITTARIUS** *(Nov. 22-Dec. 21)*: Finish what you start before you start something new. You'll face opposition when confronting a no-win situation with a friend, relative or colleague. Don't take part if you don't like the changes someone makes. ✪✪✪

## EUGENIA LAST

THE LAST WORD IN ASTROLOGY

COPYRIGHT 2007 UNIVERSAL PRESS SYNDICATE

**CAPRICORN** *(Dec. 22-Jan. 19)*: Use your energy wisely. Don't let anger be your outlet when compromise will take you to a better place. Share your feelings with someone you care about and work through any issues weighing you down. A domestic change will save money. ✪✪✪

**AQUARIUS** *(Jan. 20-Feb. 18)*: Listen, observe and decide what's best for you. Refuse to let anyone push you in a direction you don't want to go. Look for alternatives regarding work and educational pursuits. Strive for equality in your relationships and distance yourself from manipulative people. Put yourself first. ✪✪✪

**PISCES** *(Feb. 19-March 20)*: Concentrate on the projects that broaden your awareness or add to your qualifications and skills. You have plenty to gain by monitoring spending while trying to raise your income. Change is overdue, but a well-thought-out plan is necessary before you begin. ✪✪✪✪✪

**Birthday Baby**: You are unwavering, helpful and generous. You are intuitive and original.

*✪: Avoid conflicts; work behind the scenes. ✪✪: You can accomplish, but don't rely on others. ✪✪✪: Focus and you'll reach your goals. ✪✪✪✪: Aim high; start new projects. ✪✪✪✪✪: Nothing can stop you; go for gold.*

# SUDOKU

**Conceptis Sudoku** *By Dave Green*

| | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | | | | | | 6 | | 3 |
| | | | | 3 | | 8 | | |
| 5 | | | | | 6 | 4 | 2 | |
| 4 | | | | | 9 | | 8 | 6 |
| 8 | 7 | | 6 | | 4 | 9 | | |
| | | 6 | | | 1 | | | 2 |
| 2 | 1 | 3 | 7 | 4 | | 5 | | 9 |
| | 6 | 8 | 2 | 1 | | | | 4 |
| 7 | | 5 | | | | | 1 | 8 |

Difficulty: ★★ 2/20

Sudoku is a number-placing puzzle based on a 9x9 grid with several given numbers. The object is to place the numbers 1 to 9 in the empty squares so that each row, each column and each 3x3 box contains the same number only once. The difficulty level of the Conceptis Sudoku increases from Monday to Saturday.

**Yesterday's Answer**

| | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 4 | 9 | 7 | 3 | 5 | 6 | 2 | 1 | 8 |
| 2 | 3 | 8 | 1 | 9 | 4 | 6 | 7 | 5 |
| 1 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 2 | 8 | 4 | 9 | 3 |
| 6 | 7 | 2 | 4 | 3 | 1 | 5 | 8 | 9 |
| 5 | 8 | 3 | 6 | 7 | 9 | 1 | 4 | 2 |
| 9 | 4 | 1 | 5 | 8 | 2 | 3 | 6 | 7 |
| 7 | 2 | 4 | 8 | 6 | 3 | 9 | 5 | 1 |
| 3 | 1 | 5 | 9 | 4 | 7 | 8 | 2 | 6 |
| 8 | 6 | 9 | 2 | 1 | 5 | 7 | 3 | 4 |

©2024 King Features Syndicate, Inc.

Difficulty: ★ 2/19

## WONDERWORD

By DAVID OUELLET

**HOW TO PLAY:** All the words listed below appear in the puzzle — horizontally, vertically, diagonally and even backward. Find them, circle each letter of the word and strike it off the list. The leftover letters spell the **WONDERWORD.**

**CABBAGE SOUP** Solution: 7 letters

| | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| K | I | T | C | H | E | N | S | T | O | L | L | A | H | S |
| O | C | C | R | O | C | K | P | O | T | L | A | S | P | P |
| O | D | L | E | N | N | E | F | G | A | R | L | I | C | I |
| C | E | E | E | T | T | R | O | F | M | O | C | R | U | N |
| E | M | L | F | E | U | S | T | O | V | E | E | E | R | A |
| L | Y | P | L | F | K | A | L | E | K | A | N | N | R | C |
| E | H | M | E | I | U | A | S | R | M | I | B | N | Y | H |
| R | T | I | E | B | E | T | O | M | W | L | A | I | C | L |
| Y | O | S | L | E | N | P | S | I | E | P | C | D | H | I |
| E | M | Ⓜ | D | R | D | A | I | N | A | S | O | I | I | O |
| L | A | Ⓔ | A | E | U | E | D | C | N | N | N | S | C | E |
| S | T | Ⓐ | L | S | T | C | E | E | E | I | O | H | K | V |
| R | O | Ⓛ | A | A | H | E | R | B | S | R | M | I | E | I |
| A | U | G | L | O | N | O | I | T | I | R | T | U | N | L |
| P | E | P | P | E | R | E | D | N | A | I | R | O | C | O |

©2024 Andrews McMeel Syndication www.wonderword.com 2/20

Bacon, Blend, Celery, Chicken, Chop, Comfort, Cook, Coriander, Cream, Crockpot, Cumin, Curry, Dinner, Dish, Fennel, Fiber, Garlic, Herbs, Kale, Kitchen, Ladle, Leek, Meal, Mince, Napa, Nutrition, Olive Oil, Onion, Parsley, Pepper, Plate, Pulled Pork, Recipe, Salt, Sausage, Sauté, Shallots, Simple, Spice, Spinach, Stove, Stuffed, Thyme, Tomato, Wine

**Yesterday's Answer: Pictionary**

To purchase THE COLLECTED WONDERWORD, Volumes 56 through 76, order on line at www.WonderWordBooks.com. (In Canada, call 1-855-232-2367)

# Points records fall with the East beating the West, 211-186

**INDIANAPOLIS** (AP)—The NBA wanted more competition. It got more points instead—more than ever before.

And once again, the All-Star Game was all offense.

All-Star MVP Damian Lillard of the Milwaukee Bucks scored 39 points and the Eastern Conference beat the Western Conference 211-186 on Sunday night, with the winners putting up the most points in the game's 73-year history. The previous mark: 196 by the West in 2016.

"We had fun," East captain Giannis Antetokounmpo of the Bucks said.

It was a flurry of records: The total points of 397 smashed the record of 374 set in 2017, while the East made 42 3-pointers to break the mark of 35 set by Team LeBron in 2019. The sides combined for 193 points in the first half to break the any-half record of 191 set last year, and the East tied an any-half record by scoring 104 by intermission.

Jaylen Brown of the Boston Celtics had 36 and Tyrese Haliburton from the hometown Indiana Pacers finished with 32 for the East, while Antetokounmpo had 23 and Jayson Tatum finished with 20.

AP

The East team, lead by captain Milwaukee Bucks forward Giannis Antetokounmpo, right, hoists the trophy after defeating the West 211-186 in the NBA All-Star basketball game in Indianapolis, Sunday, Feb. 18, 2024.

"To be able to have this kind of accomplishment, it's special," Lillard said.

Perhaps unnoticed: Karl-Anthony Towns of the Minnesota Timberwolves scored 50 points for the West in just 28 minutes. Shai Gilgeous-Alexander of the Oklahoma City Thunder scored 31 points for the West.

"The shot-making from the East was incredible," West forward Kevin Durant said. "Hard to play defense when somebody's shooting 30-, 40-footers over you."

The West scored a ton of points, too: At 186, it had the fourth-most by any team in All-Star history. And obviously, the most ever in a loss.

Among the other records:

■ The East tried 97 3-pointers; the previous record was 90 by Team LeBron in 2019.

■ The teams combined for 66 3s made and 168 3s attempted (previous records were 62 and 167 in 2019).

■ The teams combined for 163 field goals made and 289 attempted (previous records were 162 in 2017 and 286 in 2016).

"Obviously, it wasn't high intensity, at all," Haliburton said.

Lillard made some history, too. He defended his 3-point shootout title on Saturday night—then won MVP on Sunday night. The only other player to win a Saturday event and All-Star MVP in the same weekend was Michael Jordan in 1988, when he won the dunk contest as well as the MVP trophy.

"Dame put on a show," Tatum said, "and I was happy for him."

The highlights were from everywhere. Lillard pulled up from halfcourt in the third quarter—swish. Luka Doncic tried a shot from about 70 feet late in the first half; it hit near the top of the backboard. Towns even threw an alley-oop to Stephen Curry; the Warriors star is much more of a shooter than a dunker, so he simply laid it in instead.

The only drama in the fourth was about the record—and really, that wasn't in doubt. The East had 160 points through three quarters, only needing 37 more to set the team All-Star record.

Brown's 3-pointer with 1:54 left broke the mark, giving the East 197. Haliburton made the shot that sent a scoreboard to the 200-point mark for the first time in any sort of official NBA history, connecting from deep with 1:27 left.

Lillard said the East wanted the record.

"Everybody was asking what the record was," Lillard said. "We found out and went after it."

And Lillard ended it in style—a 44-footer to close the scoring. He made 11 3-pointers on the night, with the official distance of those recorded at 347 feet. A typical NBA 3-pointer is 24 or 25 feet; Lillard averaged 31 1/2 feet on his 3s Sunday night.

Durant said he was watching Lillard on the West bench while sitting with the Los Angeles Clippers' Kawhi Leonard. "We were in awe," Durant said.

Defense was optional, sometimes accidental. There were 14 steals, most of those coming off wayward passes. And there were even three blocked shots.

Otherwise, it was shooting practice. And the tone was set quickly—Haliburton had five 3-pointers in a wild span of just 1:32 in the first quarter, helping the East take a 53-47 lead after the opening 12 minutes.

NBA Commissioner Adam Silver and other league executives were seeking a more competitive All-Star Game after last season's 184-175 matchup was widely panned—and television ratings plummeted.

Even Hall of Famer Larry Bird, honored Sunday at the NBA Legends Brunch, said was hoping the message from the league resonated and players took the All-Star Game a little more seriously.

"I know what this league's all about and I'm very proud of it," Bird said. "I'm proud of today's players. I like the game they play. ... I think it's very important when you have the best players in the world together, you've got to compete and you've got to play hard and you've got to show the fans how good they really are."

They might not have competed the way Bird wanted—but they showed the fans plenty about how good they are.

It had a big-game, Finals-type atmosphere—but obviously, nothing near a playoff feel. Donovan Mitchell threw a 50-foot inbounds pass underhand, Bam Adebayo inbounded a ball off Nikola Jokic's backside before dribbling downcourt and making a 3, and Devin Booker went through pregame with a hat on backwards.

Fun was had, and LeBron James—in his 20th All-Star Game, extending his record—said there was one big takeaway.

"The good thing that came out of tonight is none of the players were injured," James said. "Everybody came out unscathed."

Except the scoreboard, perhaps.

# Bird, Catchings, Rose, Miller among honorees at NBA Legends Brunch

**INDIANAPOLIS** (AP)—Larry Bird is officially a legend, Tamika Catchings was overwhelmed, Jalen Rose was moved to tears and Reggie Miller hugged his former antagonist Spike Lee.

As always, the NBA Legends Brunch was not lacking for moments.

The brunch—held on Sunday before the All-Star Game and one of the tougher tickets to get over the course of the weekend—brought together more than 150 former NBA and WNBA players and some of the greatest ever like Julius Erving, Dominique Wilkins and Oscar Robertson.

Bird received the Legend of the Year award, Catchings received the Pioneer Award, Rose got the Bob Lanier Community Impact Award and Miller won the Hometown Hero Award.

"I have not hit a jump shot in more than 30 years and here I am," Bird said after taking the stage. "Come on."

Catchings, an Indiana Fever legend, was introduced by her father, former NBA player Harvey Catchings. He told stories about how when they would play she always wanted to keep going, how games to five points weren't enough for her—and how he never let her win.

"I come standing here today because of all of you and being able to watch my dad and emulate him," Tamika Catchings said. "While he was in practice, we'd be back there and I was Dr. J and I was Harvey Catchings and I was the late Bob Lanier. Larry Bird, come on now. I got to be all of you guys. And over the years, by emulating your game, I found my own game."

Rose tearfully told the story of riding in his mother's 1979 Chrysler around the time he was in fourth grade, moving a floor mat and seeing a hole in the floorboards. He said that was the moment that he vowed to make it big by making it to the NBA.

"I'll never forget saying to my mother, 'I'm going to make it to the league. I promise,'" Rose said. "'I'm going to be Dr. J. I promise.' … And now Dr. J knows my name."

Miller was presented with his trophy by Lee, dressed in blue and orange—the colors of his favorite team, the New York Knicks, the team that was often victimized by Miller and the Pacers. Most famously when Miller scored eight points in nine seconds to win a game at Madison Square Garden.

"I don't consider myself a legend, not amongst the people that are in this room," Miller said.

## DUNK CONTEST

Julius Erving wants to see more big names in the dunk contest.

Mac McClung of the G League's Osceola Magic won the event for the second consecutive year on Saturday night, beating Boston's Jaylen Brown, New York's Jacob Toppin and Miami rookie Jaime Jaquez Jr.

It was a far cry from the old days. What's recognized as the inaugural dunk contest took place in 1976 at the ABA's All-Star Game, featuring five big names—Artis Gilmore, George Gervin, Larry Kenon, David Thompson and Erving.

"I think the fans would like to see the bigger-name players out there," Erving said. "With all due respect to the guys who are in the dunk contest, the big names are in the 3-point shootout. The big names are in the skills competition."

Added Spencer Haywood, also appearing with Erving on a panel to discuss the ABA's history when the dunk contest topic came up: "They would love it," he said, referring to the fans. "We were never afraid of losing."

It has been a talking point in the NBA for years about how biggest stars tend to pass on the dunk contest. Brown was the first All-Star to take part in the contest since 2018.

## RATINGS UP

All-Star Saturday Night—headlined by the Stephen Curry vs. Sabrina Ionescu 3-point contest—had 10 million unique viewers in the U.S., the NBA said.

That's the most in four years and represented a 54% increase from last year.

## G LEAGUE

Team Earn Your Leisure won the title at the G League Up Next games on Sunday, going 2-0 in the four-team tournament.

Orlando two-way player Trevelin Queen—who has appeared in 30 NBA games, 13 of them this season with the Magic—won tournament MVP honors. He's also a past G League champion, G League MVP and G League Finals MVP.

## THE BREAK

There are no games Monday, Tuesday or Wednesday in the NBA. The season resumes Thursday night with 12 games, then 10 more on Friday.

The six teams that have to wait until Friday to resume games: Miami, Atlanta, Memphis, Portland, Milwaukee and Minnesota. And oddly, the Bucks and Timberwolves—with the All-Star Game coaches, Milwaukee's Doc Rivers and Minnesota's Chris Finch—open their post-All-Star slates against one another.

# Shohei Ohtani won't play in Dodgers' spring training opener

By LARRY LAGE
AP SPORTS WRITER

Shohei Ohtani did not participate in live batting practice Sunday, and his Los Angeles Dodgers spring training debut is on hold.

Dodgers manager Dave Roberts said Ohtani, who is coming back from elbow surgery, will not play in Thursday's opener against the San Diego Padres. The two-time MVP signed a record $700 million, 10-year contract as a free agent in December.

Roberts, though, has been encouraged by Ohtani's progress physically.

"He's a lot further along than I think any of us—maybe not named Shohei—would have expected," Roberts said on Saturday. "He's worked really hard, very diligent in his work, so he's ahead of schedule.

"What that means as far as when he's going to play in a Cactus League game, I don't know that answer. But it just seems like every single day, he keeps better and feels real good."

AP

Los Angeles Dodgers designated hitter Shohei Ohtani (17) participates in spring training baseball workouts at Camelback Ranch in Phoenix, Sunday, Feb. 18, 2024.

The two-time AL MVP won't pitch this season following right elbow surgery on Sept. 19 but hopes to be ready as a hitter by the March 20 opener against the Padres in Seoul, South Korea. He hit .304 with 44 home runs last year with the Los Angeles Angels.

## ACUÑA'S ASCENT

Ronald Acuña Jr. has already done a lot with the Atlanta Braves, but manager Brian Snitker is expecting even more from the 26-year-old outfielder.

"He's going to set records that probably he's the only one who is going to be able to outdo them," Snitker said. "The scary part is, he's at an age where he's going to get better."

Acuna won his first NL MVP award last season after becoming the first player with 40 homers and 70 stolen bases in a major league season.

## RELIVING HISTORY

In the Boston Red Sox spring training clubhouse in Fort Myers, Florida. during a rainy morning that shortened their workouts, the team's infamous matchup with the New York Mets on Game 6 of the 1986 World Series was playing on one of the TVs.

Hall of Famer Jim Rice, a member of that team, watched some of it along with a few pitchers, including newcomer Lucas Giolito.

Just before the winning run came home after a grounder went through first baseman Bill Buckner's legs, the satellite TV provider's signal went out. By the time the signal was restored, another program was airing on the MLB Network.

## MAKING MOVES

The Baltimore Orioles acquired 29-year-old lefty Matt Krook for cash from the New York Yankees in a trade. Krook, who was designated for assignment on Tuesday, had a 24.75 ERA in four appearances last season, his first in the majors. In 27 games last year at Triple-A Scranton/Wilkes Barre, he was 1-1 with a 1.32 ERA.

Baltimore designated utility player Diego Castillo for assignment to clear a spot for Krook on its 40-man roster.

Shortly after Baltimore designated infielder Livan Soto for assignment on Friday, the Angels claimed him off waivers. Soto played 22 games for them the previous two seasons.

## GETTING A CHANCE

Toronto agreed to a minor league contract with 31-year-old Daniel Vogelbach.

The 6-foot, 270-pound designated hitter was heading into his final year of arbitration eligibility when the Mets cut him in November. He struck out in more than one-fourth of his plate appearances last season, hitting .233 with 13 home runs and 48 RBIs in 104 games.

Vogelbach was an All-Star with the Seattle Mariners in 2019, when he finished with 30 homers and 76 RBIs that stand as career highs.

# New uniform designs drawing plenty of scrutiny during opening days of MLB spring training

By STEVE MEGARGEE
AP SPORTS WRITER

What players are wearing has garnered as much attention as what they're doing at spring training.

Major League Baseball teams are wearing newly designed uniforms this year aimed at improving performance and helping players stay cool throughout games in the summer months. The new gear, designed by Nike and manufactured by Fanatics, has drawn mixed reviews from players.

"I know everyone hates them," Philadelphia Phillies shortstop Trea Turner said Friday. "We all liked what we had. We understand business, but I think everyone wanted to keep it the same way, for the most part, with some tweaks here or there."

Nike has been designing MLB uniforms since 2020 and Fanatics has been manufacturing them since 2017, but this is the first year for the Nike Vapor Premier jerseys

MLB officials say these uniforms improve mobility by providing 25% more stretch and also will dry 28% faster. The lettering, sleeve emblems and numbering are less bulky in an attempt to make uniforms more breathable and comfortable.

Commissioner Rob Manfred says he expects criticism to fade.

"In baseball, any new initiative, there's going to be some negative feedback," Manfred said Thursday. "First and most important, these are Nike jerseys. So we entered this partnership with Nike because of who they are and the kinds of products that they use. Everything they've done for us so far has been absolutely, 100% successful across the board.

"The jerseys are different. They're designed to be performance wear as opposed to what has traditionally been worn. So they are going to be different, but they have been tested more extensively than any jersey in any sport."

Fanatics representatives declined comment. Nike didn't respond to an email sent to its media relations office.

Manfred noted feedback was positive when these uniforms were introduced at last year's All-Star Game.

MLB released a video Tuesday showing players raving about the new uniforms during the All-Star Game. MLB also issued a news release about the new gear this week that included testimonials from St. Louis third baseman Nolan Arenado, Baltimore catcher Adley Rutschman and Atlanta outfielder Ronald Acuña Jr., the reigning NL MVP.

"It's almost like wearing my favorite fitted T-shirt out on the field—and so easy to move around in," Arenado said in a statement released by MLB.

But when players started wearing them this week, many complained.

"Don't fix what's not broken," Phillies pitcher Matt Strahm said. "The looks of it, it just looks different. The names are smaller on the back."

Dave Meluni, an associate teaching professor for Syracuse's department of sports management, mentioned issues that could keep fans from buying the jerseys. Meluni said qualities that might help the jerseys improve performance by being more breathable and lightweight could make them less appealing to consumers.

"There's a look that they're cheaper," Meluni said. "And then you go to buy them and they're not."

Meluni said colors appear faded on jerseys for some teams, such as the Chicago Cubs and Seattle Mariners.

While complaints about the uniforms have received plenty of attention this week, some players have offered praise.

Los Angeles Angels outfielder and three-time AL MVP Mike Trout said in an X post that "Change can be good and I'm a big fan of these!!!"

"Somehow this feels even more authentic than the ones that we've been wearing, to be honest," Los Angeles Dodgers outfielder Jason Heyward said in a video on the team's X account as he wore his new jersey. "The material feels that much nicer. It feels like it's going to breathe better, and I think the really cool part for the fans—the numbers on the back having that different texture."

Manfred's confident more players will come around.

"So I think after people wear them a little bit, they're going to be really popular," Manfred said.

And the players who would prefer the previous uniform designs realize they don't have much choice in the matter.

"It is what it is," Strahm said. "Deal with what we've got. Anytime you change something, there's a learning curve and adjustment period. How many people in America get to choose their work uniforms?"

## BLUE JAYS ADD ESCOBAR

The Toronto Blue Jays and infielder Eduardo Escobar agreed to a minor league contract, and he will report to big league camp.

The 35-year-old hit .226 with a .269 on-base percentage, six homers and 31 RBIs in 99 games with the New York Mets and Los Angeles Angels last season. He has played 13 seasons and has a career .253 batting average with a .305 on-base percentage, .430 slugging percentage, 164 homers and 636 RBIs.

## ORIOLES CLAIM CASTILLO

The Baltimore Orioles claimed utilityman Diego Castillo off waivers from the Phillies and designated infielder Liván Soto for assignment.

Castillo, 26, appeared in one game for the Arizona Diamondbacks last season after hitting .206 with a .251 on-base percentage, 11 homers and 29 RBIs in 96 games for the Pittsburgh Pirates in 2022.

Soto, 23, played in 22 games with the Los Angeles Angels over 2022 and '23 and hit .375 with a .414 on-base percentage, one homer and nine RBIs.

# SIS, MHS whiz past foes in girls soccer

By LEIGH GASES
leigh_gases@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

Saipan International School Lady Geckos and Marianas High School Lady Dolphins whizzed past their foes in the NMIFA-PSS Girls High School Interscholastic Soccer League 2023-2024 last Thursday at the NMI Soccer Training Center in Koblerville.

The Lady Geckos won a 5-1 showdown against Saipan Southern High School Lady Manta Rays, while the Lady Dolphins held on to win by a razor-thin margin, 3-2, over the Kagman High School Lady Ayuyus.

SIS didn't get on the board first, but they went on to add more points than SSHS. SSHS' Jahsmin Ramon scored the lone goal in the fifth minute, which was quickly overshadowed by SIS' Andrei Kaithlyn Chavez's goal just a minute later.

Chavez zigged and zagged through unaware SSHS defenders until she found the back of the net 10 minutes later, for a 2-1 game. Irene Park followed in her footsteps for a 3-1 lead.

No more goals were made until the turn of the second half, when Audrey Castro let one loose in the 43rd minute. SSHS' hope to keep the gap close was then dashed when Phoenix Gross scored the fifth goal. SSHS could not find an opening past SIS defenders and settled for the loss as time ran out.

NMIFA

A Marianas High School player goes for a kick in their game against Kagman High School last Thursday in the NMIFA-PSS Girls High School Interscholastic Soccer League 2023-2024 at the NMI Soccer Training Center in Koblerville.

NMIFA

A Saipan International School soccer player goes up against a Saipan Southern High School player during their matchup in the NMIFA-PSS Girls High School Interscholastic Soccer League 2023-2024 last Thursday at the NMI Soccer Training Center in Koblerville.

In the MHS vs. KHS game, MHS' early first half goals held on to win them the game as KHS tried to rally.

MHS' Tamia Kileleman-Hix scored right off the opening whistle, just as KHS were still getting their bearings straight. Not eight minutes later, teammate Raven Anderson made it 2-0, and quickly added another goal in the 11th minute before KHS could even blink.

The rest of the first half went on silently, with both teams struggling for possession. It ended without a peep from KHS attackers, but in the beginning of the second half, Pia Ngewakl made it 1-3.

The Lady Ayuyus still had time to make a comeback and Ngewakl knew it as she scored the second goal in the 42nd minute to make it 2-3. However, MHS' defense wore them down and made sure no more damage to their goal was made and KHS fell by just one goal.

## CNMI

*From page 20*

the third seeded Lebanon team and an unseeded Turkmenistan team in order to advance to the quarterfinals. Whatever the result, I'm sure we will leave our mark here in Sri Lanka," said Ramsey.

All three junior netters are hyped to represent the CNMI in another off-island tournament.

"I am grateful and honored to represent the CNMI in its first Junior Davis Cup. It will be a great experience for me with my teammates and coach Colin Ramsey. Me and my teammates will do our best to win more matches to make the CNMI proud. We got this!" said Lam.

Yu and Wessel basically echoed what Lam said.

"I feel excited to play my matches with my teammates and my expectations is to play my best," said Yu.

"My thoughts are the same as in any other off-island competition—represent the CNMI as best I can and try to beat every single country as best I can," said Wessel.

## BUCKS

*From page 20*

the Torchbearers' Caleb Cui and Daniel Song marched them through the court with vigor—nailing almost each attempt they made. They led the team to an overwhelming 25-16 standoff at the end of the first half.

However, the Bucks' gameplay included an evenly distributed strategy—with their main shooter Taytum Jacob leading the team. The second half saw a lot of back-and-forth action, as momentum swung from the Torchbearers to the Bucks.

Jacob made all the difference come crunch time as he shot a three-pointer, then followed it up with a field goal and free throw. Cui matched his energy and tried to carry the Torchbearers with fastbreak plays during their possession—one after the other, but Jacob had the last play and scored the two points that clinched their second win.

LEIGH GASES

Victor Barcinas of Rota's Dr. Rita H. Inos High School jumps just out of reach of a Kagman High School player last Friday in the 2023-2024 IT&E Interscholastic Boys High School Basketball League at the Marianas High School Gymnasium.

Jacob collected 12 points, while Victor Barcinas made 8 points, and Danny King scored 6. Cui garnered 18 points for his efforts, as Song made 13.

In last Friday's game, the Bucks had a smoother time against the Eagles as they won by 15 points.

By the end of the first half, the Bucks had annihilated the Eagles' defense by putting up 25 points to the Eagles 9. Jacob was once again the star of the show as he aggressively attacked paint which in turn converted charity points.

The Eagles had no gas left in them to catch up in the last half and the Bucks easily ran away with their first victory in the tourney. Jacob sank in 13 points, while Peter John Manglona was close behind with 11.

**Dr. Rita H Inos 40** – Jacob 12, Barcinas 8, King 6, Manglona 5, Charfarous 4, Hocog 3, Fernandez 2.

**ACS 38** – Cui 18, Song 13, Wang 5, Zhang 2.

**Scoring by halves:** 16-25, 40-38.

**Dr. Rita H Inos 44** – Jacob 13, Manglona 11, Barcinas 4, Manglona 4, Mesgnon 4, Charfarous 4, Kapileo 2, King 2.

**GCA 29** – Yang 8, Yumul 7, J. Taitano 6, Lai 5, Jones 3.

**Scoring by halves:** 25-9, 44-29.

## HIRO

*From page 20*

"He missed his best time. The result was 2:10.71. His best time and the CNMI national record is 2:05.86. It's all my fault. My mistake was making a practice plan on Saipan as a short course race. The preparation for long and short is so big different. If we had good preparation for long course like in the Solomon Islands, Isaiah's result would be different definitely. Like the 200m IM, it's all the coach's fault," said Kimura.

Aleksenko, for his part, admitted that he was disappointed about his Doha stint, but eventually chalked everything up to experience.

"I was pretty disappointed with my DQ but it's a learning experience and something that I can get better from. It was a very small mistake that got me this DQ and I will learn from it and I will work even harder for my next competitions," he said.

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

The CNMI's Isaiah Aleksenko, left, and Maria Batallones in the 2024 World Aquatics Championships in Doha, Qatar.

**Points records fall with the East beating the West, 211-186.**

**PAGE 17**

Saipan Tribune
# Sports

**SIS, MHS whiz past foes in girls soccer.**

**PAGE 19**

# CNMI makes debut in Jr. Davis Cup

By MARK RABAGO
mark_rabago@saipantribune.com
EDITOR

The CNMI will make its much-anticipated debut in the Junior Davis Cup this week when it battles Lebanon and Turkmenistan in Group C in Colombo, Sri Lanka.

Coach Colin Ramsey is joined in the South Asian nation by junior netters La Hunn Lam, Nason Wessel, and June Yu.

"It's an exciting prospect for future tennis development in the NMI. This is the first time for us to see how we stack up against the entire Asia/Pacific region. I hope we will be able to show why we deserve to compete at some of the largest stages in junior tennis. We have a great chance to do well in the tournament," said Ramsey.

It also helps that the CNMI's campaign in its very first Junior Davis Cup rests in the capable hands of Lam, Wessel, and Yu—all former Pacific Oceania Junior Championship winners.

In Colombo, Lam will assume the CNMI's No. 1 position, Wessel the No. 2 spot, and Yu will be third in the pecking order.

"June and Nason have never played on clay court before so it will be a challenge for them to adapt. LaHunn is a clay court veteran and is giving some tips, however. Unseeded in the tournament, our boys will have to get through

*See CNMI on Page 19*

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

From left, CNMI Junior Davis Cup coach Colin Ramsey and players Nason Wessel, La Hunn Lam, and June Yu pose with the CNMI flag in Colombo, Sri Lanka.

## Bucks bag 2 wins in boys hoops

By LEIGH GASES
leigh_gases@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

Dr. Rita H. Inos High School Bucks made their short trip up north worthwhile as they bagged two wins in the 2023-2024 IT&E Interscholastic Boys High School Basketball League at the Marianas High School Gymnasium.

They capped their visit with a close win against Agape Christian School Torchbearers, 40-38, last Saturday, and won their first game against Grace Christian Academy Eagles, 44-29, last Friday.

The Bucks trotted through the court with a fast pace against a formidable ACS team, narrowly escaping them by a margin of just 2 points.

The two-man army of

*See BUCKS on Page 19*

LEIGH GASES

Ryan Manglona of Rota's Dr. Rita H. Inos High School is fouled while attempting a layup during their game against Kagman High School last Friday in the 2023-2024 IT&E Interscholastic Boys High School Basketball League at the Marianas High School Gymnasium.

## Hiro blames himself for Isaiah DQ in 200m IM

By MARK RABAGO
mark_rabago@saipantribune.com
EDITOR

National swimming coach Hiroyuki Kimura blames himself for Isaiah Aleksenko's ill-fated swim in the 200m individual medley in last week's 2024 World Aquatics Championships in Doha, Qatar.

The 17-year-old was on his way to breaking fellow Saipan Community School alumnus Rezne Wong's 200m IM age group record when disaster struck in the form of a dreaded disqualification.

"Isaiah swam bravely, then he marked new CNMI record time—2:12.31! We were so excited to break Rezne Wong's 17-18 record of 2:14. 48. However, tragedy hit us as Isaiah was disqualified in the individual medley. But I believe it is a process in which the sport of swimming is evolving."

The many-time national swimming coach said in recent years, video has been introduced in all sports, especially in swimming and the sport has become stricter when it comes to monitoring legal strokes.

"There is an underwater camera in each lane now and many other underwater cameras are placed to shoot swimmers from all angles. The footage is then played back and thoroughly checked after the race. Isaiah's DSQ this time could not be determined by conventional judgment systems (only human eyes from pool deck), but it was revealed using technology. Although it is very disappointing to lose the CNMI record in the 17-18, I think this is also proof that the sport of swimming is evolving," he said.

Kimura finally got to examine the video proof himself the next day and acknowledged that the decision to disqualify his swimmer was correct.

"We watched his underwater video in the official video room. One of his legs was a little wavy after the breaststroke kick. In breaststroke, both the stroke and the kick must be symmetrical, so this is a clearly DSQ. Before, it was a difficult to judge just from the pool deck. In the future, NMI swimmers participating in international competitions should check their form more seriously and carefully every regular practice. Isaiah's DSQ this time served as a lesson that things can happen even to swimmers who have practiced as much as Isaiah."

Kimura was quick to absolve Aleksenko and said his ward's disqualification falls squarely on his shoulders.

"I feel so sorry for Isaiah. This DSQ is the coach's fault. He swam greatly with his best effort!"

The day prior to Aleksenko's 200m IM debacle, the Marianas High School senior swam the 200m butterfly and the outcome was also not what Kimura hoped for.

*See HIRO on Page 19*